MAY 25¢

# fantastic ADVENTURES

THE TALE OF
**THE RED DWARF**
WHO WRITES WITH HIS TAIL
by THE RED DWARF HIMSELF

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# She pressed his hand tenderly and whispered:

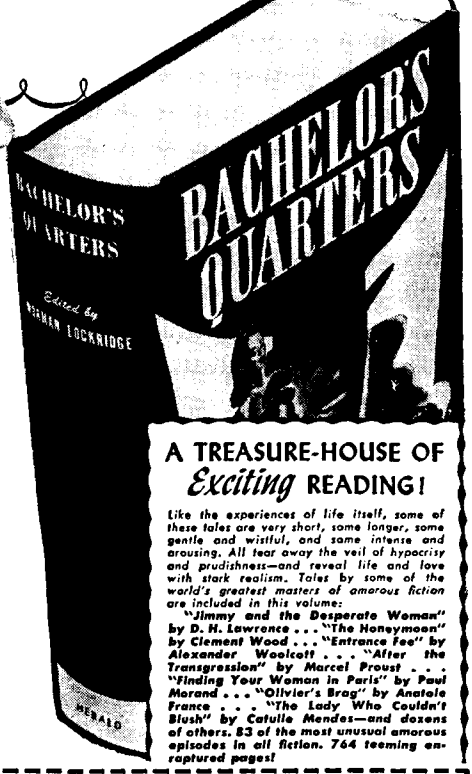
## "Come back in an hour... I shall wait for you!"

For many months Baron von Leisenberg had wanted to hear those words! His handsome frame quivered as they were spoken . . . was the exotic Clare, beloved of all men, ready to marry him at last? Or had she discovered some new trick to test his devotion? What happened when the Baron returned? What strange twist of fate was to make this rendezvous exciting beyond measure? Every word in Arthur Schnitzler's story "The Fate of the Baron" leaps alive with revealing human emotions. Every episode unveils new facets of excitement in the search for love.

"The Fate of the Baron" is only one of 83 amazing stories. Here is a collection of amatory fiction unsurpassed in all literature! Scores of tempestuous characters play turbulent roles in these pages. Selected from the world's best stories by a modern sophisticate . . . for the enduring pleasure of those who appreciate the bold, the venturesome, the exciting.

# BACHELOR'S QUARTERS

Unlike ordinary fiction the stories in Bachelor's Quarters can be read with mounting pleasure time and again—just as you continue to enjoy looking at intriguing pictures. The passions of the ages are dynamically embodied in these pages. Nowhere else will you find such an incredible variety of saints and sinners . . . demimondes . . . paramours . . . Casanovas . . . Don Juans—those restless humans who are forever seeking new thrills in loving and living!




## A TREASURE-HOUSE OF *Exciting* READING!

*Like the experiences of life itself, some of these tales are very short, some longer, some gentle and wistful, and some intense and arousing. All tear away the veil of hypocrisy and prudishness—and reveal life and love with stark realism. Tales by some of the world's greatest masters of amorous fiction are included in this volume:*

***"Jimmy and the Desperate Woman" by D. H. Lawrence . . . "The Honeymoon" by Clement Wood . . . "Entrance Fee" by Alexander Woolcott . . . "After the Transgression" by Marcel Proust . . . "Finding Your Woman in Paris" by Paul Morand . . . "Olivier's Brag" by Anatole France . . . "The Lady Who Couldn't Blush" by Catulle Mendes—and dozens of others. 83 of the most unusual amorous episodes in all fiction. 744 teeming enraptured pages!***

## FREE • *for your added enjoyment...*

## "ONE OF CLEOPATRA'S NIGHTS"

The most seductive female in all history—Cleopatra! What strange influence did this curvaceous queen have over men—*all* men? Why did kings and commoners alike melt before her charms? "One of Cleopatra's Nights" takes you behind the scenes—into the most intimate quarters of Cleopatra's palace—and reveals the voluptuous nocturnal pastimes of the queen. In these burning pages is the secret of Cleopatra's power over men. Don't miss this amazing revelation! It's yours FREE with a copy of "Bachelor's Quarters."

### SEND NO MONEY

***You get "Cleopatra" FREE . . . "Bachelor's Quarters" for FREE EXAMINATION! All you have to do is mail the coupon with your name and address. Do it now—for endless hours of the most unusual reading pleasure you've ever had!***

**Herald Publishing Co., Dept. N-4501, 45 E. 17 St., New York 3, N. Y.**

## FREE EXAMINATION COUPON

**HERALD PUBLISHING CO., Dept. N-4501**
**45 East 17th Street, New York 3, N. Y.**

Please send me for FREE EXAMINATION a copy of "Bachelor's Quarters." Include my FREE copy of "One of Cleopatra's Nights". I will deposit $2.98 (plus postage) with postman when the package arrives. If I am not completely satisfied, I may return "Bachelor's Quarters" in ten days and you will return my money. In any case, I may keep "One of Cleopatra's Nights" as my FREE gift.

Name.....

Address.....

City & Zone.....State.....

☐ *Save Postage!* Enclose $2.98 with coupon and we will pay postage. Same FREE Gift, FREE EXAMINATION.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

## OFFER YOU LOW-COST SPECIAL TRAINING

FOR SUCCESS IN MODERN BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

**Air Conditioning and Plumbing Courses**
Air Conditioning
Heating Plumbing
Refrigeration
Steam Fitting

**Chemistry Courses**
Chemical Engineering
Chemistry, Analytical
Chemistry, Industrial
Chemistry, Mfg. Iron and Steel
Petroleum Refining
Plastics
Pulp and Paper Making

**Civil Engineering, Architectural and Mining Courses**
Architectural Drafting
Architecture
Bridge and Building Foreman
Building Estimating
Civil Engineering
Coal Mining
Contracting and Building
Highway Engineering
Lumber Dealer
Reading Structural Blueprints
Sanitary Engineering
Structural Drafting
Structural Engineering
Surveying and Mapping

**Communications Courses**
Electronics
Practical Telephony
Radio, General
Radio Operating
Radio Servicing
Telegraph Engineering

**Electrical Courses**
Electrical Drafting
Electrical Engineering
Electric Light and Power
Lighting Technician
Practical Electrician
Ship Electrician

**Internal Combustion Engines Courses**
Automobile
Aviation, Commercial Pilot, Private Pilot
Diesel-Electric
Diesel Engines
Gas Engines

**Mechanical Courses**
Aeronautical Engineering
Aircraft Drafting
Foundry Work
Heat Treatment of Metals
Industrial Engineering
Industrial Metallurgy
Machine Shop
Mechanical Drafting
Mechanical Engineering
Mold-Loft Work
Patternmaking—Wood, Metal
Reading Shop Blueprints
Sheet-Metal Drafting
Sheet-Metal Worker
Ship Drafting
Ship Fitting
Tool Designing
Toolmaking
Welding—Gas and Electric

**Railroad Courses**
Air Brake
Car Inspector
Diesel Locomotive
Locomotive Engineer
Locomotive Fireman
Railroad Section Foreman

**Steam Engineering Courses**
Boilermaking
Combustion Engineering
Engine Running
Marine Engineering
Stationary Firemen's
Steam Electric
Steam Engines

**Textile Courses**
Cotton Manufacturing
Rayon Weaving
Textile Designing
Woolen Manufacturing

**Business and Academic Courses**
Accounting Advertising
Arithmetic Bookkeeping
Business Correspondence
Business Management
Certified Public Accounting
Commercial
Cost Accounting
Federal Tax
First Year College
Foremanship French
Geometrical Drawing
Good English
High School
Higher Mathematics
Illustrating
Motor Traffic
Postal Service
Salesmanship
Secretarial
Sign Lettering
Spanish Stenography
Traffic Management
Typist

**If you can read and write, and are willing to study,**

**WE CAN TEACH YOU!**

● *Special service and attention are always given to the student who may need extra help in order to understand.*

**REASONABLE TERMS MAY BE ARRANGED**

**The successful man DOES today what the failure INTENDS to do tomorrow. Mail this coupon NOW!**

**INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS**
**BOX 6202, SCRANTON 9, PENNA.**

Please send complete information on following subject:

*(Write above Technical, Business or General Educational Subject in which you are interested.)*

*Name*_____ *Age*_____

*Home Address*_____

*City*_____ *State*_____

*Present Position*_____ *Working Hours*_____ *A.M.*_____ *P.M.*

*Length of Service in World War II*_____ *Special tuition rates to members of Armed Forces. Enrollment under G.I. Bill of Rights approved for War II Veterans.*


PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# fantastic ADVENTURES

MAY 1947

All Features Complete



WILLIAM B. ZIFF
*Chairman of the Board and Publisher*

B. G. DAVIS
*President*

Vice Presidents:

GEORGE BERNER
*Sales and Advertising Director*

MICHAEL H. FROELICH
*Editorial Director*

H. J. MORGANROTH
*Production Director*

H. G. STRONG
*Circulation Director*

*Secretary-Treasurer*
A. T. PULLEN

*Art Director*
HERMAN R. BOLLIN

*Editor*
RAYMOND A. PALMER

*Managing Editor*
HOWARD BROWNE

*Associate Editors:*
WILLIAM L. HAMLING
HENRY A. BOTT

*Art Editor*
MALCOLM SMITH



THE EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK
By The Editor ..... 6

THE MAN WHO MAPPED THE BRAIN
By Gary Lee Horton ..... 73

THE LUCK THAT FAILED
By Pete Bogg ..... 88

ROMANCE OF THE ELEMENTS
By Rod Ruth ..... 89

HUMAN ELECTRICITY
By Jerry Walsh ..... 101

FLIGHT AGAINST TIME
By H. R. Stanton ..... 101

THE PIRATE BARBAROSSA
By June Lurie ..... 115

OUT OF ANY WAR
By Alexander Blade ..... 144

THE GREEN TOWER
By Sandy Miller ..... 145

READER'S PAGE
By The Readers ..... 168

ANIMALS KNOW
By Pete Bogg ..... 172

DISAPPEARANCE OF THE WOLF-MEN
By Jon Barry ..... 178


*Front cover painting by Robert Gipson Jones illustrating a scene from "The Tale Of The Red Dwarf."*


Published bi-monthly by ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY at 185 North Wabash Ave., Chicago 1, Ill. New York Office, Empire State Building, New York 3, N. Y. Washington office, International Building, 1319 F Street, N.W., Washington 4, D. C. Entered as second-class matter October 31, 1945, at the Post Office, Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of March 3rd, 1879. Subscription $2.50 for 12 issues; Canada $3.00; Foreign $4.50. Subscribers should allow at least two weeks for change of address. All communications about subscriptions should be addressed to the Director of Circulation, Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, 185 North Wabash Ave., Chicago 1, Ill.





PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VOLUME 9 NUMBER 3

# All Stories Complete

**THE TALE OF THE RED DWARF** (Short novel—25,000)..... by The Red Dwarf..... 8
Illustrated by Henry Sharp

The fat red dwarf sat in his cave writing in a book—with the end of his tail . . .

**MEET MY MUMMY** (Novelette—14,000)..... by Elroy Arno..... 46
Illustrated by Magarian

She rode in a shell-like boat across the pond in the moonlight. Who was she?

**PAINTING OF THE PROPHET** (Short—7,500)..... by David Wright O'Brien.... 74
Illustrated by Gray

It was a weird painting, with cascading colors that seemed to show you—

**WHEN THE SPIRIT MOVES ME** (Short—6,500)..... by Lee Francis..... 90
Illustrated by Brady

When Willowby Jones rented the room he thought it was empty. It was, but for—

**TOMORROW AND TOMORROW** (Short—7,000)..... by Ray Bradbury..... 102
Illustrated by Virgil Finlay

The typewriter started writing out a message—when no human hand was touching it . . .

**THE EMPEROR'S EYE** (Novelette—15,500)..... by Leroy Yerxa..... 116
Illustrated by Brady

They called the piece of glass the "Eye Of Magic." And it lived up to its name . . .

**SHADES OF HENRY MORGAN** (Novelette—12,000)..... by H. B. Hickey..... 146
Illustrated by J. Allen St. John

When Morgan, the pirate, died, his page in history was closed. Or so it seemed . . .

Copyright 1947, ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY
Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations
We do not accept responsibility for the return of unsolicited manuscripts or artwork. To facilitate handling, the author should enclose a self-addressed envelope with the requisite postage attached, and artists should enclose or forward return postage. Accepted material is subject to whatever revision is necessary to meet requirements. Payment covers all authors', contributors' and contestants' magazine rights in the U.S.A. and all other countries in the article and/or illustrations and for publicity and promotion in connection therewith and will be made at our current rates upon acceptance. All photos and drawings will be considered as part of material purchased. The names of all characters that are used in short stories, serials and semi-fiction articles that deal with types are fictitious. Use of a name that is the same as that of any living person is coincidental.



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# The Editor's Notebook

## A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

THE lead-off story for this month is serving a dual purpose. "The Tale Of The Red Dwarf" is excellent fantasy to begin with, but even more important, it is a story that Richard S. Shaver deliberately wrote for the people who have read his stories in our big sister magazine, "Amazing Stories" and promptly pronounced them a lot of insane drivel. To these so-called critics, Mr. Shaver has written a story that he says is a great big lie. There isn't a word of truth in it—hidden or otherwise. It's all just a lot of fantasy—no more, no less. *But*, the strange thing is that when Shaver wrote the story, deliberately trying to make it nothing but an interesting fantasy, somehow a number of truths crept in. You'll read more about this in the preface which Mr. Shaver attached to his story.

BEFORE we forget, we want to tell you about an interesting fantasy film we saw the other day. It was a completely amateur project, produced by a group of fans in Passaic, New Jersey. The producer, Reginald McMahon, of 170 President St., of that city, wrote us and mentioned that his group had produced their first fantasy film, entitled, "Mars." Naturally we were very much interested, and we wrote Mr. McMahon asking if it would be possible for him to send us a print. He did, (a sixteen mm film) and we had quite a treat. We must admit that we were very skeptical, and that's putting it mildly. But when the first scene opened on the screen, we started changing our minds. And we had to admit when the film was finished, that this was not just another "fan" project, but actually something constructive, something worth taking note of.

The film has a sound track with the music, "Pictures At An Exhibition" by Moussorgsky. The film itself shows Mars as it existed centuries ago, and now. That is, the producers' conception. The sets were constructed from balsa wood and papier mâché, the entire cost of production at around $200. It is almost unbelievable that such a fine job was accomplished with so meager a budget at the group's disposal.

We want to go on record right now saying that we think projects like this should be encouraged in the fantasy fan field. We would like to see clubs spring up with people interested in producing fantasy films, working together, pooling enough resources to enable further films to be produced. Then, the various clubs could receive prints and show them at their meetings. Along these lines we think it would be a fine thing if all fans interested would contact Mr. McMahon, who has a number of shooting scripts waiting to be produced, but who, because his group is small and is doing this strictly as a hobby, is handicapped with a lack of necessary funds. Here's a chance for fandom to really do something constructive, and take it from us, the first film, "Mars" merits all the support fandom can give.

NOW to get back to this month's lineup. On page 74 you'll find one of the last stories David Wright O'Brien wrote. Publishing this yarn is both a sad and joyous event. Sad because one of the truly great writers in the fantasy field is gone, and joyous because we know that Dave's story will be a treat for everyone. But we'll leave that up to you when you read, "Painting Of The Prophet." We think you'll agree.

LEE FRANCIS is back this month with one of the cleverest "ghost" stories we've read in a long time. It's all about a man named Jones who rented a room so he could be alone—and then found that the room was already occupied. This wouldn't have been so bad, but the occupant happened to be a ghost! So Jones decided to move, and he did. But the ghost seemed to have moving problems too, all of which lead up to— But you read the story and find out for yourself.

"TOMORROW And Tomorrow" is Ray Bradbury's contribution to the issue, and a mighty fine contribution it is. Bradbury is gradually becoming a top favorite in the fantasy field, and this story is one of his best.

ONE of the few remaining stories by Leroy Yerxa is also appearing this month—"The Emperor's Eye." Leroy was always one of your top favorites, so nothing more need be said. . . .

ELROY ARNO comes up with a yarn called, "Meet My Mummy." You've heard of mummies—the things they dig up in Egypt. Well, according to Mr. Arno, you don't have to go all the way to Egypt if you're looking for a mummy. Just look for a moonlit pool. . . .

WHICH just about winds up shop for this month. See you again in July—*Rap*.



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# ADVICE TO READERS:

## who are suffering the miseries of

# BAD SKIN

## *Stop Worrying Now About Pimples and Blackheads*

### *and other externally caused skin troubles*

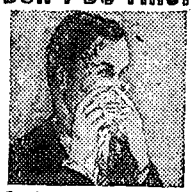
### JUST FOLLOW SKIN DOCTOR'S SIMPLE DIRECTIONS

**SQUEEZING pimples or blackheads to get rid of them is a nasty, messy business—but that isn't the worst of it. Because doing so may also be injurious and leave your skin with unsightly, embarrassing blemishes. There is, now, a much easier, safer, cleaner way to help you rid your face of ugly, offensive, externally caused skin troubles. You merely follow a doctor's simple directions.**

### *Good-Looking Skin Is Not for Women Only*

You—yes, you—can have the same healthy, normal complexion free from externally caused skin troubles simply by giving your skin the special care that handsome screen stars give theirs. There's almost nothing to it—it is just about as easy as washing your face. *The whole secret consists of washing your face in a way that thoroughly cleanses the pores of every last speck of dirt and grime*—something that ordinary cleansing may not do. In fact, examination after examination shows that, usually, it is not a case of "bad skin" so much as a case of incomplete or faulty cleansing. What you should use is a highly concentrated soap like Viderm Skin Cleanser which penetrates the pores and acts as an antiseptic. When followed by a quick application of Viderm Medicated Skin Cream, specks of irritating dirt and grime are quickly washed out; they dissolve and disappear, leaving your skin clean, clear and free of the specks that often bring out pimples, blackheads and other externally-caused skin troubles.

**DON'T DO THIS!**



*Don't murder your skin by squeezing it. Skin is delicate. When you break it, you leave yourself wide open to miseries. It's far easier, far safer, to let the Double Viderm treatment help you enjoy a handsome, clear and blemish-free complexion.*

### *It's Foolish to Take Bad Skin for Granted*

It doesn't pay to risk marred skin, blotches, blemishes. Your very success in business, love and social life may depend upon your looks. *Handsomeness and a good appearance usually start with the condition of your skin.* Nobody likes a skin that looks unhealthy, unclean, abused, and marked with blackheads or pimples. WOMEN ARE ATTRACTED TO MEN WHO HAVE SMOOTH, CLEAR, ROBUST-LOOKING SKIN. Business executives don't choose men who have a poor-looking complexion. Don't take chances with your success in life when this inexpensive Viderm formula may help you.

*Don't murder your skin!* Here's all you have to do to keep it smooth and clear. Use Viderm Skin Cleanser when you wash your face. Rub the rich lather of this highly-concentrated soap on your face for just a few seconds and then rinse it off. Then apply a little Viderm Medicated Skin Cream and that's all there is to it. Viderm Medicated Skin Cream quickly disappears, leaving your skin nice and smooth. This simple treatment, used after shaving, helps heal tiny nicks and cuts, relieves razor-burn and smarting, besides conditioning your skin.

### *Give Your Face This Treat for 7 Days*

Stop worrying and being embarrassed over what may happen to your skin. Just send for your Viderm Double Treatment this minute, and be confident that you will keep a smooth and clear complexion. Follow the simple directions, written by a doctor, that you will get with your Viderm Double Treatment; then look in your mirror and listen to your friends admire your smooth, clear skin—the kind that women go for.

Just mail your name and address to The New York Skin Laboratory, 206 Division Street, Dept. 46, New York City 2, New York. By return mail you will receive both of the Viderm formulas, complete with full directions, and packed in a safety-sealed carton. On delivery, pay two dollars plus postage. If you wish, you can save the postage fee by mailing the two dollars with your letter. Then, if you aren't thrilled with results, your money will be cheerfully refunded. Remember that both of the formulas you use have been fully tested and proven, and are reliable for you. If they don't help you, your treatments cost you nothing. After you have received your Viderm, if you have any questions to ask concerning abused skin, just send them in.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*The Tale of*

# The Red Dwarf

## *Who Writes With His Tail*

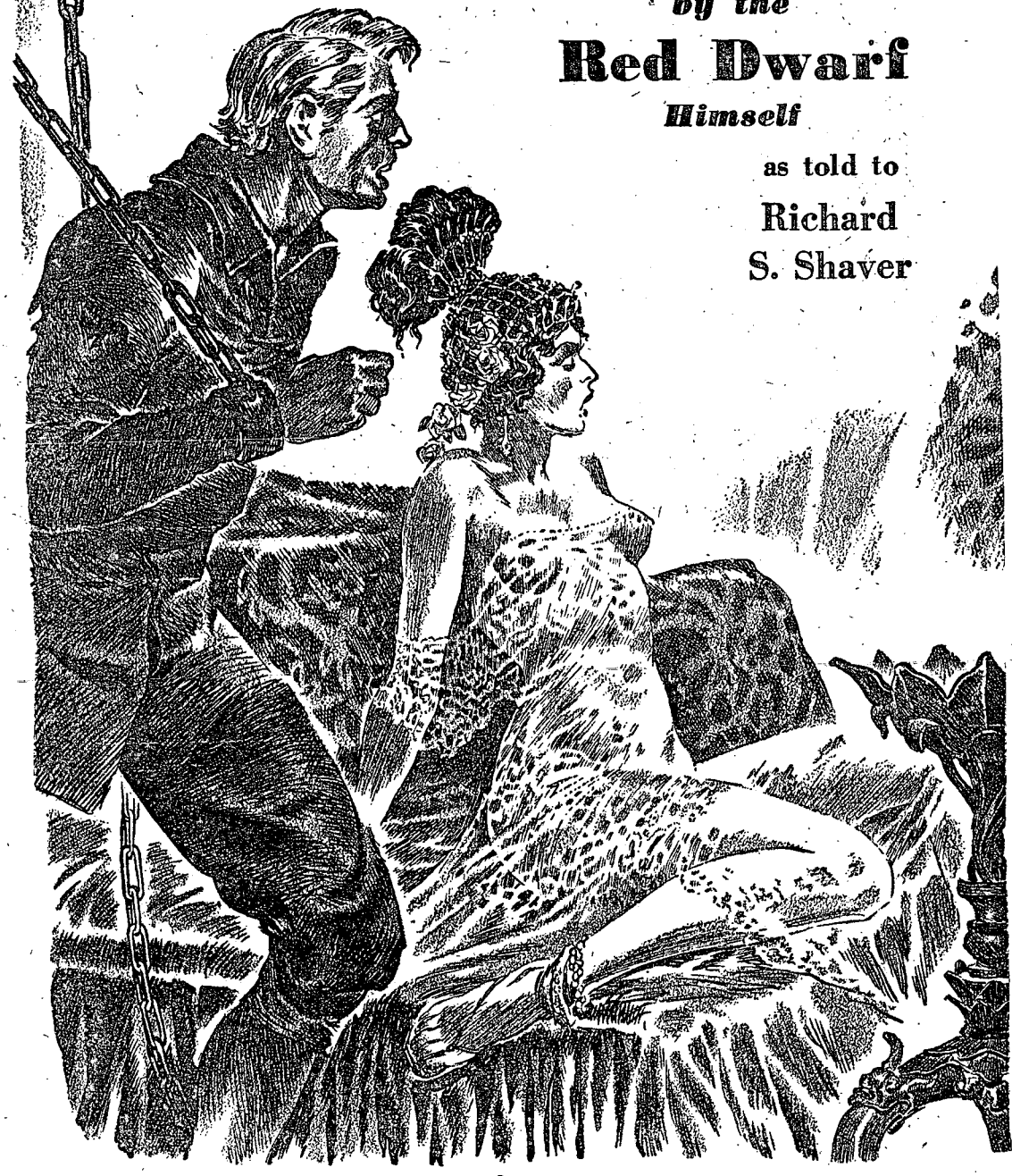
*by the*

**Red Dwarf**

*Himself*

as told to

Richard
S. Shaver





PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

***In a far-away world in a far away time and space, there sits a red dwarf, busily writing a book.***

TO my numerous critics and admirers, as well as those four or five per cent who have called down the wrath of God on my head for saying there was something terribly, deadly true in my stories. But, you see, there *is* a terrible truth about the life of the underworld, and I did want you to



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

know, for it is safer knowing.

But to those four or five per cent, who wrote in and demanded of me, or damned of me, that I should cease immediately the practice of labeling my fictional accounts "true," because they were fiction, or something.

I want to announce that this story is written solely from reflex action, a mental irritation set up by these letters—setting up the peculiar stimulation necessary to the birth of any story. I tried, in spite of knowing it couldn't be done, to write a story that contained no truth, no new or old truth, no useful purpose, no idealistic striving to save the world from the dreadful danger which its own ignorance of the facts of life places round it. But in spite of all my efforts the unwanted commodity worked its "despicable" way between the l i n e s again.

This story was really meant to be a BIG LIE and in spite of all, I find it is only a picture of things as they really were once in the past, and that is sad. But I am sure no one but myself can discover the interloping lines which are not meant to be there, so I assure you, the five per cent for whom it is really written, that this story is *not true*.

I *can* write a story and admit it is a lie.

The people do not act like people, but appear and disappear, among the mad collection of mountains, caverns, pink rivers and purple women, stone Gods and etc. They all act demented, and there you are. It is my private opinion that the world is really mad, and so a truth crept in. I represented people as they really are—mad! You can't help it!

The planet, which is not earth, yet acts as if it had a past like our earth's, —and there another of my private truths crept in—I suspect life acts the same, and often is nearly identical to earth life on other planets, for a reason only a philosopher could understand.

The reason is that salt crystals always look like salt, and life looks like life, and if you have something like a man, he will have a history recognizable in nearly all details as our own, once removed. That is, a maple tree on Venus is yet a maple tree, and a man on Venus who bears a thousand generations of men will yet give them all the tendency to be as identical in every way as are the maple trees to their ancestors.

The story is not a true confession, not a murder mystery, not anything but fantasy in the ancient tradition of fantasy.

So don't get all steamed up and tell me I said it was true. I didn't. I didn't even write it, the Red Dwarf wrote it. But you won't believe that, so I will have to explain that it is a lie, for I translated and rephrased the whole thing to make it acceptable to earth minds.

Your well-meaning friend,
Richard S. Shaver.

POST SCRIPT:

I have been careful to indicate in every story that certain truths had been inserted into fiction for those people who would recognize them, and for no others. That the truths I put in were *not for* people who did not recognize them as true, as similar to things they knew were true, people who had had contact with the voices of the underworld as well as sights and sounds that could have been produced by nothing but the means I described. For all others, those who did not know, I stated that the implication of Truth was to be considered a Fictional Device used to heighten the illusion of reality.

Yet, the sort of people who never read footnotes and Forewords keep

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

writing to me and Rap and to other publications, often being printed in other publications, saying we have lied to them, saying something was "true" that was yet indicated as Fiction, etc. Discouraging, but I can only keep labeling stories true for those who know enough to pick out the truths after one gives them a lead—and at the same time remind the other readers that I only use this to make it sound real. After all my care, these others jump on me and on AMAZING, even after we warned them.

So I wrote this story, discouraged, but still hoping, as a BIG LIE. It is not true to life. It is not a picture of another civilization. It is not anything true in any way. But I wish it was, as I enjoy stories that are about the *really* Fantastic Truth. But heck, people read the papers and believe them, and how can I do better?

So I have put off my life work of exposing hidden truth to people who have seen a little of it and can recognize it, and for the others I have done one story to suit them. But I doubt that it will. And how can it please people who like the other kind? It is most discouraging. Still I like the story, and know it is not all bad.

Truth has a way of infiltrating, and one has a respect for it, and must point it out and introduce it when one sees it. I have a strange suspicion that even "Aladdin's Lamp" was a true story, and the lamp a remote control device. And it creeps in.

Now, friends and enemies and other readers, let me remind you THERE ARE SUCH TERRIBLE TRUTHS no ordinary man can face them. I tried to tell you a few of these ugly truths of life on earth, known to millions of men beside myself, an open secret to everyone but the sheltered minds of the masses.

You kicked, you squawked, you w r o t e to people denouncing me—"I said ugly t h i n g s were true"—you couldn't face it, you denied it. But the evidence is inescapable, in every newspaper for the seeker—

AND I WILL CONTINUE TO SHOW YOU THE VAST and UGLY FACE OF TRUTH. So Help Me!

NO man can ever really encompass all of the truth about even one drop of water. We haven't the capacity. But, in ordinary minds shielded by the people who write school books leaving out all the ugly, nasty things like belly-worms and persecution and political murders, prostitution and demagoguery—you know the list of words as well as I—but do you know them REALLY? No, you don't.

There *are* Forbidden Fruits, Hidden Vices, Vast Corruptions and Robberies and Slaveries and Mutilations of Whole Peoples, that go on today, to you as well as all others costly in the extreme, and few men care to face these awful Truths even in their own minds, because they are incapable of seeing what they do not want to see. Yet some of us are *forced* to look!

## CHAPTER I

IN A CERTAIN flame-shot, gloomy but vastly grand cavern, sits a fat red dwarf. He is the last of his race. Upon his plump round knee he holds a very big book. At intervals he adjusts his antique square spectacles, curves up his peculiarly pointed tail and with the worn end of it inscribes certain singular data within the pages of the much too big book.

Now, far above the rocky forgotten place where the Red Dwarf sits in his gloomy grandeur, on the surface of the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

planet, in a lovely valley under the green-bright rays of the bizarre sun, lies a God.

Through the center of the wide flowered valley meanders a river of vivid pink liquid, wide and placid and many-curved.

The sands that line the stream are purple. They are purple and poisonous to life.

Above the purple ribbons of treacherous poison sand are the grassy banks of the river, with strange flowered plants among the grasses. Beyond the grass the trees move their limbs slowly, rhythmically, waiting, waiting for what is to come to them.

The lonely God's limbs are partly imbedded in the blue soil; it has been an age since he has had an impulse to move those strange, mottled, sculptural limbs. Stonily the God stares out at the lazy pink river, over the slowly groping limbs of the far, hungry trees, toward the distant hills that are the unsuckled breasts of the Zoögyte, the planet-being which allows these things to exist upon her rondure.

Time races by more swiftly than the slow liquids of the river, time beats her impatient waves of awful effort against the impervious shell of the sleeping Zoögyte, upon the stony, unmoving, imbedded limbs of the God, upon the tossing limbs of the waiting trees, time even sends her effort down through the rocks to the Red Dwarf, but nothing moves except the slow streaming river, and the rhythmic limbs of the hungry trees.

Now time conceives a new stratagem to set her grip upon this impervious planet that waits, regarding time not. And down out of far space toward the flower-strewn rondure of the Zoögyte who sleeps, down and down from the infinite reaches of Aether, floats a purple globe of life. It is a vastly different purple from the dead and poisonous purple of the sands of the river. It is aquiver with strange and eager stirrings, the globe that floats so lightly nearer and nearer the banks of that eerie stream. It is a-flash with many tiny lightnings, and ever-changing, flowing, twisting colorings, amid the purple sheen of the thick skin of the globe are other changing colors, that shift and peer and are somehow alive with unrealized life meanings.

THE staring eyes of the gloomy, lonely God watch the slow drifting descent of the glistening purple globe from the far star-ways. Watch it alight upon the purple and poisonous sands, watch the eager life within shrink from the dull and poisonous sands that reach and drink at the vivid, flashing, unborn will-to-be within.

Now something stirs within the gloomy undead God's ego, some far flicker of remembering life leaps toward the life within the purple globe, leaps in kinship and exhortation to the disappointed being that is the unmoving God.

Slowly, reluctantly, his limbs tug release from the sod within which his limbs are so long imbedded—slowly the vast unwilling strength of him heaves itself aloft above his pillaring legs, and the God totters to the purple globe, lifts it and carries it to the safety of the flowered grasses.

For a long time the hermit-God, the God who had foresworn life and all life's doings, bent over the purple globe, watching the eager unborn within. Watching and brooding over the past, when he too had loved life and all life's vast complexity, before he had plumbed the depths of life's corruption and condemned it all as beneath his own effort.

At last some flickering memory of the good things that might have been in the life he had given up moved

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

within his refusing mind, and one great finger poked at the thick skin of the purple life-globe, poked and pushed till a little opening was formed in the strange heaving skin of the globe.

Then, incuriously, sadly, cursing himself for sentiment he should not possess, the God turned his back upon the pierced globe, and lay himself down in the same place where his body had made a deep perfect impression in the earth.

Time beat again upon the round breast of the Zoögyte planet, and nothing stirred anywhere but the limbs of the waiting trees, the soft flow of the river, and the Red tail of the Dwarf. But time laughed softly, for there *was* another stirring going on unheeded of the sleeping Zoögyte. For all about the unmoving sad limbs of the God played and laughed and fought and screamed and scrambled and built and loved and dreamed innumerable small bright-eyed creatures, purple skinned and yellow haired and much too fecund.

## CHAPTER II

DRUGA, the son of Simon, lay by the pink waters of the river where his hut was built, looking at the far stretching limbs of the unmoving God, and dreaming of many things.

But chiefly Druga dreamed of the bright eyes of his girl, Darlene, and of how he might impress her. And what Druga wanted most for himself and for the respect that would arise in the eyes of Darlene if he could show her wisdom. For Darlene thought Druga very foolish but otherwise quite acceptable.

Druga rolled over and looked up at the green-bright ever-sun, and the brightness of that far wonder was the sheen of Darlene's hair, the sparkle of Darlene's eyes. Her green-booted feet, with the curling green leather forming a flower's sheath from which her rounded lovely limbs reached upward toward her supple swaying hips, where the orchid silken skirt was caught about the swell of her thighs, and the soft expanse of loins spread satin wonder of purple skin upward to the navel—the delicate little depression of her navel punctuated the too great wonder of her loveliness. Druga shuddered with ecstasy as his eyes moved on up to the glory of her breasts, where the flower petals of her orchid collar spread their netted veinings about her laughing face.

"Dreaming again, Druga?" Darlene bent over his rapt face, and prodded Druga's ribs with her soft, green-leather toe. Druga started laughing, too.

"I saw you, but thought I was still dreaming, so lovely are you. Are you sure you live, and are not still my fevered brain making a fool of me?"

"When are you going to bring me proof of your wisdom, Druga, that you have promised me so often? Does wisdom lie in dreaming of me till you cannot tell my limbs from the limbs of your dream women?"

Now Druga saw the impatient refusal of him in the eyes of Darlene, and knew that today was the day he must go to the caverns and ask of the Red Dwarf how to get himself wisdom, for no more could his loved one be put off. He had dreamed himself into this predicament, and something must be done, or she would turn away from him and wed some other of the many men who worked much harder than himself and could provide much more of the good fruits of life.

Druga rose and stretched himself, the sleeping strength of the mother Zoögyte poured through him in a flood, and he said—

"Today I go, little flower, and when I return I will have wisdom for you."

The motionless God heard the words

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the young and foolish lovers, and a sad smile spread slowly across his stony face, for none knew better than himself that wisdom was as well left alone by these bright, happy *ephemerae*.

DRUGA left the soft arms of Darlene, and trudged off toward the far stony hills that were the unsuckled breasts of his unknowing mother earth. For there, it was whispered among the hunters who travel far ways, lay the mouth of the cavern where waits and writes the *Red Dwarf*, who *has wisdom*.

Now the green sun lowered to the horizon, touched it with her long, streaming green corona, and rose again, many times for the ever-sun does not pass out of sight. And Druga clambered on up the rocky crevices, toward that dread place that gives upon the dark paths beneath.

Two great sleeping owls flanked the doorway, one on each side. The door was of ancient brass, barred with seven great bars. Above the door was written these words:

"Abaddon—interstitial intromit. Omnium gatherium, terminus omega, concordia discors, fascicula spicilegium. Misera hyperbaton ephialtes in puris naturalibus disquam.

"Demon nisse et cacodemon, Lorelei et lamia, intromit abnormis sapiens decquisit phylacteric, Demon Stradum. Memorium cram-was-he, illuminant Sulphurus gynaecium meta-stasis exostosis spiculum acuit.

Dwarfus Rubrum."

"NOW what language is that? This Red Dwarf is an indifferent student, it appears," murmured Druga, sitting down before the door to rest and to decipher the words burned deep into the brass. He looked at the great sleeping owls, then nudged the left hand one with his foot.

The owl ruffled his feathers and seemed to get as big as a barn. Druga started back in alarm, but the great eyes opened and were sleepy and only slightly fierce.

Druga said, "What is the Abra-ca-dabra over the door?"

"The words say, 'Blind youth, wisdom is not what it is cracked up to be.'"

"Your translation may be correct," opined Druga, "but methinks the words are antique, and that they mean 'Wisdom is not considered to be of importance that it really inheres.'"

"Broad shoulders are required for the acquisition of true wisdom, thine own are broad, but have you the life-term necessary? Besides, the pursuit is much over-rated, whatever the antique inscription may mis-say."

"You are hardly the ideal guardian for the Door to Wisdom; you sound like a raven to me. Intromit abnormis sapiens—that means me, gynaecium Lorelei and lamia, that sounds interesting, gynaecium is something like a harem, is it not? That should illuminate the darkness of my mind somewhat."

"I am sorry to inform you, precocious youth, this is not the door to a boy's school, whatever you may think—'Abaddon intromit' has always meant the Door to Hell, to my mind, and what would you go through a door announcing the words 'misera hyper-baton.' Most suggestive of miserable music, pain's shrieks, and all that sort of thing. I wouldn't go in that door for all the pennies in Purgatory."

The owl turned its great head and looked at the flame-written words, at the burned bronze about the letters, and gloomily turned away again, regarding Druga with a yellowed, sleepy and now somewhat un-pleased eye.

"If ye think I don't know what the words say why don't you go in to the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Red Dwarf and find out?"

"It is obvious that you have little wisdom for me, so I must go farther," quoth Druga, and went up to the door and strained at the topmost bar. And with great effort he got it off and staggered aside and lay it down. And the great head of the owl turned with his moving and watched him, and seemed to vastly despise what it saw.

Each bar that he lifted off was strangely heavier than the last, and as he tugged at the last one Druga was spent and the bar would not lift. Druga took his wood-cutters' axe and cut himself a long sapling for a lever, and as he strained with the lever, the bronze bent slowly and at last burst off. The great door swung open and a blast of hot air came out, and these words seemed to come with the blast—"Wisdom is hot air." Druga wondered what such strangling, moaning words might really mean, and he decided they meant, "Hot air is not wisdom." And in he went, and the left hand owl looked at his sleeping companion, ruffled his feathers disgustedly, sighed despairingly, and settled to sleep again. And the "door to wisdom" swung sadly on its hinges, the great bronze bars lay bent where Druga had tossed them, and the sleeping owls sat guarding a door that was burst open.

AND as Druga's steps died out deep within the echoing darkness of the cavern, the left hand owl ruffled his feathers and swiveled his head like a bushel basket of dirty feathers, and opened one great yellow eye, looking at the antique letters above the brazen door. And his eye was puzzled in the extreme, and his beak moved like a man spelling out strange wordings, and his vast gloomy voice muttered—"Abraxas, beware, 'miserables'—that means 'people'—'Wisdom'—nobody knows what that means—ess—that means 'maybe,' or 'roundness,' or 'buttocks,' or 'will be,' I don't know. To Hell with wisdom and Druga." And the Owl went to sleep again.

The right hand owl stirred himself, ruffled his feathers, twisted his gloomy head clear around and opened his beak, yawning. Then he opened his eyes, great deep places of yellow flame, and saw the door burst asunder and the door's bars lying in a scattered heap. The yawning beak closed with a snap; he squirmed inside his feathers, and opened his great beak, squawking.

"What happened here to the door to wisdom?"

The other owl muttered sleepily—"To H . . . with the door."

The right hand owl glared around, saying—"The Red Dwarf will not like this, Wisdom is for himself alone!"

"If he had any, he wouldn't sit in the dark like a crazy recluse, writing what no one reads, alone all the time," said the first owl.

"If *you* had any, I wouldn't have to worry what will come of this!"

"What *do* those words over the door say?" muttered the left hand owl, opening one eye a little upon his brother.

"The proper translation is: 'Beware, little man, Wisdom is not for ephemerae, but only for the immortal Gods.'"

"Ephemerae, ephemeras, ephemarat," muttered the left hand owl. "I thought that word was 'cracklings,' from the Latin epheminate, meaning unmated, or cracked, or sanguine, or . . ."

"It is not Latin. The Romans never had any sense. It is Jovian script, from the Sybylline."

"Oh! I always wondered. Wisdom, wisdom, Thy name is worry. What the boy needs is a teacher."

"He's better off without. Teachers always have opinions. Usually wrong, teachers. Adds confusion to the seek-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing mind."

"Do you think a mortal *could* acquire wisdom?"

"He'll be a sorry mortal if he does. And we'll be sorry birds!"

"It might be a change," said the left hand owl. "Boresome occupation, this doorkeeping. Lately. . . ." He began to snore.

## CHAPTER III

DRUGA went in in the strangely red-lit gloom, and many were the portents and misty wraithlike creatures that peopled the gloom-laden path. He passed the usual three hags with their kettle, and came to the usual serpentine white female with her too-pointed breasts and clawed hands. She said: "Druga, come to me."

"You look almighty hungry to me," answered Druga, hesitantly.

She writhed her lean, too-womanish form, and the ribs stuck out, her long arms reached for him, but Druga darted past her reaching, and went on.

It was a good thing, thought Druga, that he could remember Darlene like a vivid flame of youth within his mind, or that one would have got him.

Bats flew at his head, shrieking in the bat language which he could not hear. But he went on.

Time flowed past, and he came at last to the adamantine chambering wherein sat the Red Dwarf. The past glowered down upon him from vasty sculpturings, but the Red Dwarf wrote cheerily on, his worn and pen-pointed tail gripped between ink-stained fingers.

As Druga staggered up to him, he lifted the square spectacles higher on his twisted nose, and looked somewhat frowningly upon the weary, ragged figure of the youth.

"I didn't know there were any left on this planet . . ." said the Red Dwarf, musingly.

"I had doubts of you, too," said Druga, looking at the red-limbed intricacies of the Dwarf's monstrous deformities.

"Now that we both know better, what do you want?" asked the Red Dwarf.

"I one day made a misguided promise to a certain charming young female. She has since given me no rest, but insists upon my fulfilling the promise. I had heard you were the only dealer in the commodity, so I came at last to you."

"And what is the promise. . .?"

"That I would bring her wisdom. She thinks it is a splendid thing, if I had it, as though it is an ornament, or a dress, or some glittering thing to wear upon her bright beauty, or whatever a woman thinks, she has decided to have it. And you know how women are . . ."

"I have heard." The Red Dwarf pondered. "Wisdom, a chancy word, like all words, one can place much or little in the meaning of it. If I had wisdom, would I sit here scribbling day after day?"

"I had heard the people with wisdom always scribble away their lives."

"Such people get a reputation for wisdom, for no one ever understands them, hence people deduce they must be wise. A false deduction, I assure you."

"That may be as it will, O Red One. Give me somewhat to take back to my chosen bundle of delight, that she will prize, thinking it is this word—Wisdom!"

"DOES yourself have no desire for this commodity? On some worlds it is a thing much sold, and bartered about, much talked of, worn on the head like a mortar board, glittered through endless pages of writing like fine jewels, a thing so prized that there

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are more imitations of it than a being can catalogue. Sure, I should be able to find lush samples of these imitations to give you; she would never know the difference."

"And have you none of the genuine article?"

"That I have, and myself never has any need of it, though I doubt you could carry it away with you. However, you can risk it, but Wisdom has a way of bowing the shoulders and wrinkling the face with care and worry. 'Tis a sad thing to have, real wisdom, for you are apt to know that life itself is worth little once weighed and examined, once peered at through the lens of wisdom. 'Tis a sad gift to take the poor girl, indeed."

"She *asked* for it, why not let her have it?"

"And are *you* asking for it, young man? Surely, she would like a shiny imitation just as well!"

"Of course I am asking for it, you carping old ninny. What have I been saying?"

The Red Dwarf's face clouded at the sudden insulting tone taken by Druga, who forgot for a moment just who he was talking to.

The Dwarf considered the young, fresh, impetuous, innocent, too-confident face of Druga, shaking his head sadly. Finally he pointed with a long, ink-stained finger toward the opening of a far corridor leading away, one among many such, from that misty red-lit adamantine chambering of Elder sculpture. The sensuous coilings of the succubae and other half visible creatures which peopled the whole cavern under the Dwarf's high placed seat were invisible to Druga's innocence blinded eyes, and they peered at Druga uncertainly, wondering . . .

"Down that passage lies wisdom. Much good will the getting of it do you. Look at wisdom's work with me, and fear the result of having too much!"

Druga took a good look at the Dwarfish monstrosity, that yet had mighty dignity—and said: "That's no proof!" And went the path the dwarf pointed. As he went Druga muttered ignorantly —"All the wisdom in the world couldn't do such a freak any good."

The Red Dwarf ceased to shake his head sadly and went on with his writing. (This is of course somewhat of the text upon which he was working, for all I inserted a bit to make it clear to you.)

(He wrote in the language of the race of the Red Dwarfs, and few can read that, for it is much like the Sibylline, and that is as much like Latin as black is like white, though it has something of the appearance of Latin. It is the Language in which Jove wrote his memoirs, but few have ever bothered to read them. The translations are very poor, and full of inverted, untrue conceptual mis-sensings of the use of a word. It seemed a sad thing to me that no one should ever read the Red Dwarf's writing, so I have translated and abridged and otherwise mutilated the fine work of that mighty artist in my attempt to bring to the world of man something of the Red Dwarf's genius. For which, forgive me.)

THERE were subterranean rumblings under Druga's feet, and the flapping of huge unseen wings, and a vast number of other tricks commonly found in the conjurer's trade, but which are also found in such places in a more full blown and sulphurous actuality, as Druga learned.

Druga paid his stolid attention, and went on unimpressed by the vast phantasmagorial life about and through him.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If things were that way in caverns, that is the way they were in caverns and small worry to him. For Druga was of those who believe only in what they can touch and call solid. Embryon technician, Druga.

Now the women who drooled on wide black wings over this bit of young flesh walking underneath swooped often close over Druga's head, touching him with soft black wing tips, but he walked on and did not look at their white breasts and torso above the black fur. And the various scuttling wide-eyed citizens of the cavern also drooled after his young flesh, but courage was not as great as their hunger, and besides it was seldom anything as big as Druga ever came their way, and they doubted their ability to down him. So it was that Druga came at last to the door of the chamber of the three books and looked timidly within, for the door of the chamber had inscribed upon its panels a legend in the Sibylline that looks so much like Latin but is not—"Ladysrum." It took Druga some time to translate that. He decided that the ethnic source of that word was properly ethicized into "Lads study," from the Latin Leus Rum, ie., meaning wine, since "in wine is truth," and certainly truth and wisdom are much alike.

He pushed back the great door, not hearing certain screams from the rear, and entered.

There were three great tables across the room, and chained upon the three tables were three great metal-bound books. It was as much as Druga could do to lift the cover of the first book, after he had decided that the legend on the cover meant—"Book of the Past."

"Cere's Catalogue Des Antiques" was the work of Ceres Rubigo, and it was only natural that the Sybil best known for her wisdom should have written a catalogue. To you who criticize and disbelieve such writers of the past it would of course have looked like an old Sears Roebuck catalogue, but then you cannot read the words written by the Sybillae, in the days before modern conveniences and progress have done away with all need for wisdom, as well as all need of learned books, in the Ladysrum.

Many of the pages were torn, as was only natural, of so old a book, but Druga sprawled on the big table, and read. As he read, his quick mind and fertile imagination quickly mastered all the intricacies of terminology and definition which distinguish the Sybilline from ordinary Latin, and time flowed by like water over the dam as he read and absorbed all that was known of the mighty past before the Zoögyte planet had gone to sleep, when her strength and vast mind had animated and controlled all the innumerable creatures of the earth into a tremendous symphony of organized life-meaning.

As he learned, he wept, for that time was infinitely more interesting and active than the dull period in which his own life was placed—when the mother earth slept and bothered not with life on her surface, when the great limbed God did not do sorceries or indulge in the natural creational relaxation of a God, but only slept motionless and sour-faced forever. He wept for that happy time when there was a life worth living on this sad planet, and he prayed to the mother Zoögyte to awake and once more make life into something that would grace her great skin with proper ornamentation. It could well be that she heard him, for that was no ordinary Ladysrum. Certain it was that he sensed a mighty feminine presence, and heard more than one feminine voice, and a critic whispered in his ear that these voices were only from women who

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were hiding in the rear of the room and objecting to his presence. But such sordid whispers were not for him, for he sought the truth, as a man should. It is not every man who gets into a Ladysrum of that secret and antique type, where reposed all the knowledge of the past, present and future. Here reposed truth ordinarily denied the eyes of all men.

DRUGA felt a mighty weariness as he closed the last pages of that age-forgotten book, the Catalogue of Ceres Rubigo, the Sybilline historian. For a vast time had fled by as his mind coursed through the endless corridors of wisdom which the knowledge on the pages had opened to him, and like a mighty wind the truths in the book had blown down all the forest of ignorance before him.

A mighty feminine voice which no critic could deny now came shuddering and echoing into that room, saying "Now you know the truth about the Sibyllae, their studies in the past, about the women of the past, about old women and witchcraft and magic and all such wisdom everywhere, and about all the wisdom your small head can contain has been poured into you. Are you not satisfied? Will you now go away and leave us in peace?"

But Druga was no ordinary man, and he said—"You sound as if you were freezing, and you sound like nobody I ever heard, but I will form my own conclusions about wisdom and when it is that I have attained to it. And I am not quite sure that what I have read is *true*. How can I know that?"

"Truth, lad, is something no man can ever come by, for there is so very much to know about even the slightest manifestation of infinite energy, so many interlocking electro-chemico-physiologico-universal-flux-flow changes to consider, enumerate, and otherwise think about that no *man* can ever know the full truth about anything, much less recognize it when he sees it. So give up, like a good boy, and go on and let us immortals have our Ladysrum without your intrusion, for I am very cold, and this hyper-space into which I have extruded my naked body is not insulated."

Druga for answer opened the second book upon the table, saying—"I came here to obtain wisdom, and have found the Ladysrum where much knowledge is hidden from the sight of man, and I intend to remain here until wisdom is mine. If you don't like the place where you have hidden yourself from me, why come and reveal yourself to me and don't worry so about ethics; sure it is an abused word anyway. No one should make himself as uncomfortable as you sound for the sake of avoiding the eyes of a mortal, and that a well-meaning simple youth like myself who could make evil out of nothing whatever."

And as Druga turned the great cover of the second book and read the great inscription on the fly-leaf, "Book of the Present," by Alleman Sylvanus, with corrections and later insertions and explanations by Silenus—as he read that there came a sound like a clap of thunder, and for an instant the chamber whirled like a revolving door with the draft from hyper-space where my lady had hidden herself from Druga. And for an instant he was treated to the sight of the vast white limbs of a Goddess, and who she was he did not know but a great shuddering came over him and he learned vastly more in an instant than ever mortal was privileged to learn since the antique times when earth was alive.

The Goddess caught up a bit of blueness like sky from the floor where she had dropped it. She clouded it about

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

herself until only her eyes were visible, and those eyes glared down upon Druga angrily. "Do you know what is the usual punishment for mortals who intrude upon Diana's bath?"

"That is a bit of wisdom denied me," said Druga, still shuddering from the effect of too much beauty revealed too suddenly.

"It will be taught you very soon!" said Diana, and her voice sounded much too much like a harpy to suit Druga, and his shuddering body kept on with the movement, but somehow became translated from desire to fear, and add shudders to shivers.

Diana stalked from the room, the blue-sky wrap parting revealingly about the graceful long legs of the huntress, and as she left a small squealing mob of visible invisibles poured out of the hyper-space and shot past Druga in her wake, and he knew they were her maidens who were also forbidden to show themselves to mortal man. And Druga heartily despised them for cravens, for he would have liked to see much more of them.

BUT such pursuits are not for serious minds, and he turned back to the book and went on reading of the Knowledge of the Present, and what he learned cannot be told you, for the present is a great mystery to all students, and is understood only by market dickerers, butchers and grocers, and such people.

As he read time thundered by his ears in a vast flood, pouring over him as if he were showering under Niagara Falls, which on that planet is counterparted by the falls known as "Vicarene writings"—or "Religion's muchness."

And Druga finished that tremendous book about the present slice-of-times-flow, and turned to that peculiar volume which pictures intimately the nature and course of future time.

Now time really coursed by, and his ears could not hear the sibilance of the speed of its passing as his mind flashed on ahead over the trail blazed into the future by those mighty maidens, the Sybyls who had written that book, and of their names I can only tell you a few, for many had a hand in the writing.

Per Suāda Stfan, the foremost writer of the future time, was aided by Sirenes Ligeia and Leucosia, and by Syrinx, the nymph. Daphne Cumae wrote a chapter, and there were others by Rhea, Propylae Diane had her virulent say, and Proserpine's gentle words came after, for she had peered much into the future to learn of her freedom and when it might be. (But it was not today, and everything always happens on a today. And nothing is more repulsive to a writer of the future than the word "today," or the word "Now." The only other word they particularly hate is the word "truth"—and you must never in Stfan language couple the words today and truth, for that cannot be.

(At least that is what some would have us believe but Druga tried it, and I tried it, and we both lived on.)

At last and a long last it was, Druga closed the book of the future, and got him down from the third great table, and left that mighty Ladysrum of the Gods of the far past.

Unaccountably, his limbs moved awkwardly and unwillingly, and he hobbled painfully down the long and gloomy and Hag-haunted corridors of the underworld toward the Red Dwarf.

He came at last to that chamber hewn from adamantine, and stopped to rest before the scribbling small monstrosity.

THE Red Dwarf looked up and down at Druga, and his eyes twinkled

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

malevolently and triumphantly, as he said: "SO, now you have wisdom, and all that goes with it. Are you still sure you want it?"

"I have learned many a fine thing from those books, Dwarf. And whether it is wisdom or not that I have acquired, the future will tell, for if it is wisdom, then I will overcome those difficulties you will place before me."

"I? Not I, good Druga! It is Time who places those difficulties before you, time and a certain small ticking thing which is not a clock but which nevertheless is vastly more ruthless in decreasing the number of your days-to-be."

"Time is then the enemy I must conquer with this weapon called wisdom. I do not recall anything from the three books which tells how to conquer Time."

"No, dear fellow, for Time is very clever. He has sped by you while you searched for the method whereby he can be overcome, so fast that even if you learned how it might be done you would not have time to do it."

"Why didn't you tell me that before I entered? You didn't tell me what to look for, either!"

"Well, now, here is a mirror. Look in it and see what your wisdom has cost you!"

The Red Dwarf pulled back a large red hanging upon which writhed curiously tortured figures, golden flames, and curling, winged things overhead—and behind the hanging was a great round mirror. In the mirror Druga saw an old, old man, clad in rags, bent and shivering in the warm air as if with weakness.

"That is yourself," The Red Dwarf shouted. "Now begone from here, you asked me for it, and you got it! So begone, and seek in life what no old man can ever find—the love of your boyhood sweetheart!"

Druga suspected there was some trick about all this sudden transformation, and he peered more closely at the rheumy eyes of the thing in the mirror, and saw that the eyes were wet with burning tears, even as his own. And that it raised its hand to brush away the tears even as he did himself.

The Red Dwarf went on talking, as though sorry for his anger and spite, saying:

"WISDOM is a cheat on this earth, Druga, for the getting of it is always a matter of exchange of many pleasant moment for many sterile ones—and never in the learning is there any way by which a man can get a larger number of fine and pleasant moments for the hard and anxious sweat and time which the getting of it costs. It is true that what you think *should* be true, wisdom *should* contain the antidote for this insidious poison inherent in it—but there is no telling a young man any such complicated truth, he is too impatient. So I am always angry with such as you who come asking for wisdom. For invariably you go away in such sorry condition that I cannot stand it, being tender-hearted.

"This is not wisdom, this maundering of words compiled under the Sybyllius trademark, O Red Dwarf. For it does not contain the most needful information—how to defeat Time. Time charges us far too much for the little grains of truth the books contain!"

The Red Dwarf sat himself down on sadly upon his gloomy throne, and began again to scribble with the worn posterior dangle. Druga made one last effort to get sense out of his shattered life.

"How do such as you remain firm of flesh when Time flows by for such as me?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"We of the underworld are all Liars, Druga. I am supposed to work a little bedazzlement upon you, and let you think that I am an immortal. I am the son of the Red Dwarf whom you knew!"

"Now that is a curious thing. Why should you want to fool me?"

"Men worship the Red Dwarf. It is an institution in the family. My father you saw—was he like me?"

"I detect certain differences. Then, was that appearance of Diana in her bath also such a befuddlement of the truth? Was she too merely a mortal?"

"Even I don't know everything, Druga. She is a giant, is she not?"

"Why, she was of a very large construction, and a very fine one, too. If she had been a certain house, one would say she was built of brick."

"There is no way for you to know if she was immortal or an imposter, Druga. How do you know I am not being only kind to you, and am really an immortal?"

"Then there is never any way to tell whether a lie is truth or not?"

"There is no real way to tell, Druga. The more you reason about it, the more confused you will become. I can't give you the answer to that, for I don't know. The technique of doubling can present these insoluble enigmas even to me."

"You are a kinder man than your father, the Old Red Dwarf. I had always understood there was no one in the underworld but your father and certain servants of his."

"That is a very common bit of misinformation. Now if you don't mind . . ." The Red Dwarf went on with his scribbling in the book, looking uncommonly like his father, and Druga felt defrauded even of the lie he had been given. Sure there was nothing more cruel than to lose your young body and get this rickety old thing just for the reading of a few heavy books. Druga cursed the Sibyls who had written so lengthily of nothing worth learning, and made his way by easy stages outward toward . . . He wept to think of his Darlene and her waiting for the bright gift of wisdom he was to bring. She was probably long since deep under the sod, and the motionless God brooding over her grave. For surely she would have been buried where they had always met, there at the birth place of the race.

Now as Druga hobbled along he came to that Serpentine female who had reached so hungrily for him upon his entrance. Druga looked at her sleeping form carefully, hoping to detect some slight evidence of the passage of time upon her body, and finding nothing. But his shaky legs would not carry him from her noiselessly, and she awoke and seized him before she got a good look at the worthless meat which covered him.

"Now tell me, woman who is born of a snake, do you remember a young fellow passing this way some time ago. A fellow who might have been my son?" Druga made haste to start a conversation, for her fangs were quite long in her red mouth, and her undeniably attractive face was not decided whether he was fit to eat or not.

"I SEEM to recall a man something like yourself some years ago. Men are few hereabouts."

Druga was undecided whether this monster who was woman and snake and cannibal all at once was herself or her mother, and determined to find out once and for all whether or no these creatures who were supposed to be immortal were so in truth.

"Did you ever see him pass back the way he came?"

"Now I know what you mean. You

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are he, and you are wondering if I know that this old hideous body you have put on is the same delectable morsel that passed this way before. Why certainly I know you are the same. But why should they have done this to you?"

"Well if it was not *Time* that rushed by me, why then it was Diana, punishing me for seeing her in the Ladysrum. How many years, or days, or whatever you use to tell time by in these dark sunless places—have passed since I went this way before?"

"Do I look any older, old-man-who-was-young?"

"No, but then you could be your own daughter."

"Are you so foolish as to think that the reading of a few books takes a lifetime?"

"Then one of these beings has cursed me with age out of spite?"

"That could well be. But there is little I can do about it."

"Then would you please take those large fangs of yours out of my arm, and those extremely well colored talons on your fingers out of my neck, and let me go?"

"What should you want to live for, old man?"

"Do you know that the eating of aged flesh gives the eater the age of the flesh. That age is a poison that can be taken in by eating?"

The great female creature appeared startled at the information, for she released her hold upon Druga, and he got up and brushed off his rags. His answer, he figured, was on that sudden release, for she too feared age. And she did not think his age unnatural, but due to some natural poison she could acquire by eating. But then she could well be an ignorant person.

"Are all the people of these caves liars, O woman who is more beautiful than a snake?"

"It is an ancient custom of these parts to tell whopping big lies, yes. Why?"

"Then they are not immortal, but only pretend to be, for the satisfaction it gives them to see the people of the light deplore their deficiency in the matter of life-term?"

"Something of the kind could well be the origin of the custom. But I myself believe that there are immortal creatures of vast powers."

"Yourself is not one of these, I see."

"I could well be fooling you, Druga. How do you know if I really would enjoy eating you, or if I only pretend this hunger. How do you know that every word you hear is not a lie?"

"I am beginning to wonder," said Druga. "And how is it you now know my name?"

"Look, Druga, suppose I asked of you a certain thing, would you do it for me?"

"Why, if I could. But what could these shaking weak parodies of legs do for anyone. They can hardly hold me erect for long."

"You have forgotten much that you learned, Druga. If I tell you that my name is Mors, will it remind you of anything that you payed so dearly to learn?"

"The daughter of Night, you? Why then do you pretend to be naught but a serpent-woman? And what charm of all the myriad I have learned and suspected to be only superstition should I use to overcome this enemy that has cursed me?"

"Why, since you know me, can't I summon one of my servants from the darkness, one strong enough to take on your troubles without noticing the weight?"

"Why, Mors, daughter of the dark, should you do this for me?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It could be that I hate this female, Diana, and it could be that I need you for a certain reason. And it could as well be that I am only lying to you, and will presently laugh at your old face for that of a fool who believes anything he is told."

Druga looked about, and saw many dark shapes about this woman that he had not noticed before for they were composed of nothing but blackness.

"What could it be that you would ask and I could refuse? I will do anything I can for one who does me this favor."

NOW Mors made a magic sign, and from out of the far hovering darkness came forward a small dense blackness and stood beside Druga. And a great rushing whirlpool formed between them, which left Druga feeling much improved but left the small dark shape only somewhat larger than before.

"Do not worry about the little one who has absorbed your age, Druga. He will take the poison out into the night and lose it there, and receive a reward from me, or from my mother. Now listen well, for I have work for you, and it might be wise if you do it well."

"Then am I to be your friend?"

"As you will it. But there is one who is an unfriend to me. She is a tall, lazy bit of venom who has certain objects of mine which she stole from me, and which I want back. If you have time, you might just manage to kill her."

"Then she is a mortal?"

"Whatever she is, it is not mortal. But it might be killed."

"You have given me a great deal of time, so I will have to kill this person. And where can I find her?"

"That will be arranged, Druga. Do you go on. By and by certain of my messengers will bring you what is needful to you."

## CHAPTER IV

DRUGA came out of that cave wherein nothing was what he had expected, and stood beside the two great owls. The left hand owl ruffled his feathers, swiveled his head, and opened one great yellow eye. He said—

"Did you get the bright wisdom you were looking for?"

"I have learned an endless amount of stuff, yes, but whether it is wisdom or not, events will tell me. If I can control events and their injuriousness to myself, why then I have wisdom. If I am to be robbed of my youth, and have it given me again, if I am to be tossed about like a straw on the bosom of occurrence, why then it is something else I have acquired. Tell me, have I been in there a long time or a short time?"

"I have been asleep, Druga, and time is of no consequence to me anyway. Do put the bars back in place, like a good fellow."

That was a job, but Druga did it, and as he finished, there came toward him a black shadow, leading a large grey horse. Hanging from the saddle were a great sword, a shield, and several glittering garments which looked very uncomfortable. The shadow stood waiting.

"Now what is this?" asked Druga.

"The mother, Mors, sends you these and tells me you are to use them in some work you have contracted to do."

"I am supposed to wear all that, and carry all that, and ride that huge thing thing shaped like a horse."

"You will find it all necessary, or at least appropriate." The shadow seemed impatient.

"Certainly there is nothing I would not do for Mors."

"That is the way we all feel, Druga."

So Druga put on the glittering mail,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and belted the sword about his waist, and got himself into the saddle ungracefully, for the whole business was new to him. As he sat there trying to feel as if it was possible to stay on, the black shadow handed him a paper, on which were certain lines and words.

"This paper contains a map which will lead you to Armora, and once there you will go directly to the Queen. She it is who has the articles which Mors wants returned to her. She it is you must kill if you can, but in any case get hold of the Cystrum, the ball-and-sceptre, and the little glass triangle from which hangs the silver bell of charm. Once you have these things, you return here, and your obligation is discharged."

DRUGA took the map and thrust it into his breast, set spurs to the horse and with a lurch started off. After a time he found he did not have to keep his arms round the neck of the horse, which had really a very smooth gait, but could sit upright and admire the scenery.

"Now what all this has to do with bringing wisdom to Darlene I don't know, but she will just have to wait. Sure she wouldn't know what it is if I had it for her, or how to use it when it reposes in my head, or how to get it out since I can't get it out myself. By this time she has consoled herself with something less than a wise man, anyway, and has had a dozen children. For certainly I spent a lifetime areading those terrific books, and now certainly I must know everything. And a man who knows everything should be able to find and appropriate everything needful in this life, Darlene or no. It could well be that I have outgrown the need of her and everything she means to me."

So musing Druga set spurs again to the gray horse, and came clattering up the slabbery slopes of Hamar, rocks flying to right and left—and out upon a broad highway leading, as the map said—to Armora, the city of the Sea Caverns, where this person who had stolen certain valuables from Mors must be found and punished.

It did not occur to Druga that it was strange that a vampire of a serpentine female should have turned into a Goddess named Mors, of mighty power. Nor did it occur to Druga that it was strange that one so powerful should have a need of Druga. For Druga now considered himself a man of vast value, for had he not read the Three Books. And was it not true that after reading that catalogue of awful truths no thing in reality could any more astonish him? For truth, he knew in his wisdom, is vastly more than any man can imagine, and is always greater and more complicated than any lie can possibly be. After reading all the things the superstitious Sybyls had written of as truth, about Gods and Demi-Gods and spirits, about the families of the Latter Gods and their doings, about the building of mightier things than any planet could hold upon its bosom, and about the relative unimportance of the planet that bore him in the scheme of things, and having now a fair idea of his own unimportance in the mighty scheme of All—Druga yet knew that in the tremendous mechanism that men call chance it could happen that a mere mortal could be a necessary cog.

TWO brooding Myogrifs of black granite flanked the double-valved gates of Armora, and Druga paused before them to allow a caravan to exit. The elephants heaved their bulk along before him, the turbaned mahouts shouted, and Druga did not even wonder that he had never heard of ele-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

phants on this world before. For in his reading he had traveled many worlds in his mind, and that same mind was awhirl with the terrific complexity of reality everywhere, and the workings of life's strange pattern within all that reality, so that these massive beasts and their rich burdens blocking his path were in "reality" new, but in his mind were but repetitions of the endless flows of commerce through the past, the present and the future of all space. And if you had asked him Druga could not have told you whether he still lived upon the planet that bore him or upon some other, or whether he was in truth the same Druga who had but just come out of the owl-guarded Cavern of Wisdom. For the chapters "On Repetition" in the Book of the Past had absorbed him, and he knew that life is repetition unless it is free of certain obstacles, and he knew those obstacles to be present in the purple and poisonous sands of this planet, so that nothing was very important or new, for it had all been through exactly the same patterns of movement and living and form all before, many mathematical numbers of times.

Still, even if it had all happened over and over, still a man must live and see it through as if it were new, for the pulse beat in him, but a kind of third eye inside him kept looking for that something new that had not been before, and could not be unless the obstacle were removed from all the sands of the planet. And who should sift all that sand? Certainly not Druga.

So musing, our overwise Druga cantered through the now less crowded gates of the City of Armora, and up the broad and strange and everywhere peopled and noisy streets of that city of Queen Dionaea's.

These people were not overly well observed by Druga, but they did impress him as not quite like himself, where he was purple-skinned, themselves were pink of skin, and where he had great muscles they had little bumps under the soft skin. But Druga did not know that these were of the ancient native race of the planet, and that he came of the strange seed of space that had settled on this earth not long ago. For even Druga had not learned everything, for The Books had been written long before that happened which led to the life of Druga's race.

Druga stabled his great grey horse at a tavern, and entered, and in spite of the fear and wonder on the pale pink faces at the size and peculiar color and awesome appearance of himself he noticed it not at all, but rented a room and went straight to bed. For it seemed to him some years that he had not slept.

Druga did not know that these people had never seen the purple men of his race before nor knew that they existed. He had wondered that in the Book of the Past he had not read anything of naturally colored people like himself, but always of red and pink and white and brown and black races, and never of purple men like himself. And having dismissed that matter as of no importance, Druga wondered at it no more. But the people of Armora wondered and talked of this great thewed stranger of the purple skin, and the news of him came to the queen where she sat in her garden under the live oaks. And she mused on the tale of the stranger a long time, and at last sent a messenger to summon him.

WHEN Druga at last awoke after several days had gone by, the messenger still waited, for no noise they had been able to make had awak-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ened him. Druga was buckling on the strange metal mesh of his mail, and twining the double belt of his sword about his waist, when the messenger was let in to him.

The letter was large, scented with the juice of the malbo blossom, and engraved with the great Myogrif seal of Queen Dionaea. Druga broke the wax, marveling at the creature even as he destroyed it on the wax, and read the queer characters with some difficulty.

So it was that another morning saw him waiting very plain and grim in his warlike gear which Mors had given him, and if he had known how fierce and strange he looked to these pale pink people, he would have been as worried about himself as they. But he was overawed by the glittering gauds decking the chests of the puny potentates also waiting for the ear of the Queen, and waited quietly, without speaking. Indeed he hardly knew what language it was they spoke, for it sounded unlike his own, though many words were the same, and he knew what they said.

Now women have great curiosity, and Dionaea not less than others, and the descriptions of this stranger had set her afire. For she was heartily weary of the puny men of Armora, herself being of hardier stock, lately come to rule here by virtue of the three possessions she had acquired when Mors was not looking. She peered from a slit in the curtains of the ante-room, put there herself for that purpose, and drank in the sight of Druga that had always been the delight of no one but Darlene, the healthy young strength that had been renewed by Mors in all its virility. And she sent her old minister tottering out to bring this young monster from afar in to her first of all, for business can certainly wait on such a curiosity.

Druga bowed low before the ivory limbs of Dionaea, wondering if the surname of *Diana* was not to his memory some such name, and if this large, luscious and too-white female was not some relative of that fearful goddess who had deprived him of his youth, for Mors had made it very clear who was responsible for that. He looked up into her warm yellow eyes, and noted the curling tresses hung with emeralds, and braided with ropes of pearls, and the black net dress that made her flesh to protrude everywhere exactly as if she were of pearls, modeled and motionless in beauty.

"Mors sent me for her three objects," said Druga, gloomily and thoughtfully, for Mors had not told him just what to do before the disturbing beauty of this apparently well-meaning and gentle person.

NOW occurred before Druga that metamorphosis which is one of the most wonderful and awful of the magic of womankind everywhere. In two breaths the lovely creature lolling on her throne of carved ebony became instead of woman a demon, her yellow eyes spat fire, her lovely lips curled into a harsh cavern where gleamed a tiger's bared fangs. As swiftly the seeming passed, and Druga had learned that women can anger, and can control it, too, if need seems evident.

But the voice she used upon him did not now jibe with her beauty, but was cold and shaking with a bitter dread, or was it something else?

"So you are not a man at all but only one of Mor's creations, her creature molded of night and musty magic. Begone, before I strike you with my own blade."

Dionaea drew from her belt a diamond-bladed dagger that glittered as with a feverish fire in its length, and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stood, striding one long step toward him, so that the long line of her body and bared leg struck young Druga's eye with a terrible lightning that is not hurtful, but is common to the young.

"'Twill not alarm me, whatever attitude you take, I am a man, and no creature of Mors. She sent me, and I have divulged my errand, what comes of it is to me all a mystery. I do not *have* to kill you, I do not know you, and it were best you just hand me the three objects and have done. If I were you I would not trifle with this Mor's possessions, I have seen her do more than any Dionaea can ever do."

* * *

About that time several strong arms pressed several long blades into his back, and if he had moved he would have been dead. Puny men they were, but the blades were sharp, and Druga knew that himself had said the wrong thing.

"Cast him out of the city," said Dionaea, "he is not fit to speak with; he is mad."

For the people of Armora were averse to bloodshed without cause, and she could not think of a suitable reason for Druga's demise, or it would have been all up with Druga. So it was that Druga found himself lying upon the slabbery slopes of Hamar not far from the city, horseless, weaponless, and well nigh without clothes, for the soldiers of the Queen had their own suspicions of what he had been up to.

Druga dragged himself into the hiding of the woods, the green sun descended into its short session with the shadows of the horizon, and he slept.

## CHAPTER V

NOW Druga heard voices in his sleep, and the voices said—

"What will become of the handsome purple youth when the witch-maid comes to bathe in her pool. She has a temper, and she will think he is spying on her?"

"Why worry about him—he is a stranger?"

"It is my kind heart. If he would but wake and hear us, he might yet take himself off out of her way."

"It's too late, here she comes now."

Druga awoke out of his sleep, and whether he heard voices or whether he dreamed it, there she was, in a condition of undress embarrassing to a total stranger, just about to step into the lovely pool of water at Druga's feet. Druga said—"Pardon me, but . . ."

The witch-maid turned blazing eyes upon him, and her voice froze Druga's heart as she said—

"Another of that Dionaea's snoopers, eh? I'll make short work of you, my pretty man."

"I don't feel very well, after the beating the queen's soldiers gave me when they threw me off the wall of the city. And I can't just pick up and run, I am too bruised and sore. So if you will excuse me, I'll just turn my back and you can go on with your bath. For I'll not move a limb till I feel better than I do now."

The witch-maid, now holding her gown before her as a shield from Druga's bruise-encircled eyes, strode toward him, peering through the dimness. For a long time she bent, taking stock of him with eyes that slowly lost their anger and acquired something else, a certain calculating gleam as well as another emotion which Druga was not quite experienced enough to evaluate.

"You do look a bit battered. Tell me about yourself?"

"Mors sent me here to get three objects she says that Dionaea stole from her. When I mentioned them to the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Queen, she had me thrown out of the city. More I can tell you, but I don't feel like making the effort."

"You poor ninny, you didn't tell the Queen what you came for?"

"And why not? Now I know she has them! A man like myself, inexperienced in the ways of chimera and such creatures as the Goddess Mors and the Red Dwarf—can't tell whether what he hears and sees is a lie or a vision or a dream. I was just making sure that such objects existed and that she felt guilty about them. Now I can plan to steal them back."

"You can plan, but your best defense, her ignorance of your errand, has been destroyed by your doubt of the one who sent you. You are certainly a great fool. But stay put, I may have a use for you, as well as a way to help you complete your quest. I will be with you directly."

With which words the witch-maid dropped the screening wrap and stepped into the pool, splashing about carelessly and joyfully as though Druga were a thousand miles away. The procedure Druga enjoyed mightly, for the witch-maid was well constructed, on the whole, strong-loined and deep-breasted, a figure calculated to fulfill Mother Earth's behest to be fertile. Likewise her long hair contained strange magic, even now in its wet clinging, and ever about her hovered strange singing music, as though some invisible power accompanied her, a Power that breathed of beauty as well as strength, magic vibrant flickerings went with her every movement—and Druga learned a deal about witches in a short while.

NOW when the witch-maid had come out of the pool and slowly and meditatively dried herself, bound up her too-long hair with soft cloths, and put on the gown that clasped her handsome curves so intimately. She took Druga firmly by the hand, and with the fingers of her other hand she turned a great Bezel ring upon her finger and said three strange and terrible words. And together they lifted into the air upon some strange forces' wings and flew for a distance over the trees and deeper into the forest.

They settled to earth before a sheer cliff face. Half-way up the precipice, a great stone beast glared out upon the forest, and between the mighty paws of him a round opening. Up to this opening sprang a rainbow bridge of shimmering glass, and the witch-maid led Druga up this fragile magic path by the hand.

"This magic of which you seem the master, I have studied deeply of the writings of the Sybyllae, even to before the birth of Earth, and nowhere did I find a sufficient explanation of its nature. Could you tell me, Miss Witch Whateveryourname is?"

"My name is Feronia. As for magic, it is something you are born with, but it can also be learned in some part. Are you of the blood?"

"What blood?"

"I see. You are a common sort of man. Where did you come by the purple skin, then?"

"In the valley of my birth, we are all of purple skin. But your words seem to imply that magic, then, partakes of instinct?"

"Magic *is* an instinctive power over the forces of nature. Many people are born with the instinct of magic, but never are taught properly to use it, and hence go about continually astounded at their own cleverness, or at the way magical things are always happening to them. It is such people who teach new thought, Christian philosophy, and mathematics. Others believe their words, but only themselves

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

can get the magical results by the methods they teach. As a consequence education is in a deplorable state of ignorance."

"I can imagine!"

"Can you?" Feronia's eyes were somewhat caustic as she looked at Druga's somewhat blank face. "I would have taken you for a most unimaginative person."

"Methinks some of those Sybyllae who wrote the books I read were of that type. They speak of causing magical occurrences by the most simple means, but I couldn't work the charms."

"I will teach you. Perhaps you didn't do it right."

"There is a lot I would still like to know, even though I am now a graduate, and have 'Wisdom.' "

"Is that so? Wisdom is greatly overrated, I have heard. Myself prefer natural ability to acquired memory-clutter. Study is so wasteful of time, for so many ignorant and untalented people have written endless reams of paper full."

They had now entered between the mighty marble legs of the sculptured beast of the Apocalypse. The halls of Feronia's home were vast and multiplex and translucent of wall, furnished lavishly from some time-forgotten store of wealth. Seeing that Druga was worn out, Feronia showed him to a sleeping chamber, and left him. He dropped into a dreamless slumber.

WAKING, Druga found fresh clothing, bath water, and certain peculiarly formed attendants waiting to assist him. Notwithstanding their bat-winged and web-footed dark aspect, Druga submitted, and presently appeared to breakfast much refreshed.

Feronia's dark eyes appraised him and found what she saw good, for she laughed brightly, saying: "Shades of Dirae, I thought you would still be limping and groaning. You recover quickly."

Druga groaned. "Now what did you remind me for? I had forgotten I was sore from head to foot."

"Now we must make plans. This Dionaea is not to be taken lightly, as you have learned."

"Plans are evidently what I need. Or advice."

"Mors might have noticed you were not quite bright and given you a little wisdom to get ahead with."

"Not quite bright! I would have you know I am a graduate, D.D. S., and passed the two Owls of the Cavern without their being the least worried about my wisdom."

"And what is D.D.S.? Doctor of Defunct Sybylline Foolishness?" Or Student of Divine Dodoism? Methinks you know nothing at all."

"My recently acquired wisdom did not keep the Queen from making a monkey of me, did it?"

"No, but Feronia may."

"In that case you would be worth a great deal more than wisdom."

"To you, Druga, might a witch-maid be worth more than wisdom?"

Druga looked at the peculiar lambent lights flickering in the very peculiar yellow eyes of Feronia and shuddered, but not with fear. For Druga had read of these "affairs with women," but so far had experienced none but his light attachment with Darlene, which was strictly virginal, he had since learned, after delving deeply into the Chapters on "Forbidden Delights"—"Sexualis Saternalia," etc.

Druga said—"You must know, Feronia, once and for all, my heart belongs to another. And while I have the greatest respect for your very apparent beauty and extremely evident mental powers, still my heart is not free to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

give to you."

"And what would I be doing with your heart, who have refused Demi-Gods. If you think I am or could be competing with the charm of a mortal female, you are much mistaken. If I should ever take a fancy to you, a little potion properly administered would make you mine. It is an old Russian custom with which you are unacquainted. But I have small taste for mortal lovers, they wither so quickly."

"Wither! Oh, yes, I recall a withering I had some time back, it was disconcerting."

"You may comprehend what I mean. The ordinary man withers in some forty years, and you must be all of twenty-three. While we of the ancient blood are good for at least a thousand years."

"Is that due to witchcraft, or some subtle secret medical compound, a gift from the Dark Master, or just due to hereditary characteristics?"

"We do it with words, compounded upon hecatombs of dead volumes, Druga." Feronia's voice was laden with irony, lost on Druga.

"Strange, I have never heard of the method."

"There are those who do it with actual physical study of the sciences, working with their hands with actual compounds of deadly chemicals and living transfusions of the ancient formula for Ichor, the blood of the Gods. But these methods are out of fashion, now that the modern method of working with words has come in."

"It would seem a good substitute for work, the use of words."

"The trouble with words is, as some say, that they compound an illusion whereby the subject is convinced he is a thousand years old without actually living any longer than anybody else. To get around that, I have studied both methods, and myself have learned the actual scientific method of the ancient First Students, and prefer it to the possible illusion caused by the use of Words. Words CAN cause illusions, as I will teach you. For instance, I have been told that the consumption of large volumes of weighty words cause an illusion of Wisdom, which is very hard to shake off when there is work to be done."

"That may be, but still . . ."

"There is work to be done, Druga. Let us get at it."

"Why, Feronia, there is plenty of time. I have a world of conversation on interesting phases of witchcraft to discuss with you."

"I am an experimental alchemist, Druga. There is work to be done to make magic to defeat this appropriative Queen Dionaea. She is no mumbler of words, that one. She takes what she wants."

"Still the morning is yet young, and we could employ it more pleasantly than in labor."

"GET UP, Druga, and keep your mouth shut and learn something!"

"Yes, Miss Feronia." Druga got up, and put on an apron, and followed her into a very well equipped laboratory of Thaumaturgy. Or so it said on the door, anyway.

Said Druga—"If magic and thaumaturgy are an instinctive power over the forces of nature, why all this need for labor? Don't you just control the forces with your mind?"

"Did you wish to learn that method, Druga? Then show me your instinctive power!"

"Come to think of it, I don't know that I have any instincts but the reproductive."

"Then you will have to substitute hard work for the natural instinct which leads you correctly to the solution of every problem. Did you ever do any

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

work, Druga?"

"Not that I recall. To me work is a word that . . ."

"Exactly, *word* called *work*. You must learn the meaning swiftly, or out you go."

"Nice place you have here, Feronia," said Druga, getting busy with a broom for want of knowing anything else needful to be done.

MYSTERIOUS hours later, after Druga's eyes were surfeited with chimera and his lungs well nigh collapsed with inhaling sulphurous fumes, and his hands burned with acid and weary of holding things for Feronia, they washed up and retired to the dining room.

"Have you any better idea of what is meant by thaumaturgy, and why work is required to master the least part of it?"

"I have lost a great faith in the power of words. But too, I have lost a great faith in the usefulness of a sword, or the protection of a buckler. Yes, I have learned somewhat."

When Feronia arose to return to *Work*, Druga arose with alacrity, which Feronia noted with an almost appreciative smile.

And so the days swept past, and Druga's hands became permanently stained with acids, his veins began to pulse with the powerful flow of the milky-white Ichor with which she had filled him, and his forehead had acquired certain lines indicative of thought. All of which was noted by Feronia with pleasure.

A YEAR later, Druga's purple color had faded to a pale rose, due to the whitish influence of the Ichor within his veins, his muscles had hardened to that immortal mesh of strength which Ichor gives flesh, his forehead had acquired a permanent V in the center, and his smile came less frequently and less vacuously.

Too, on certain nights his one *instinct* had ruled him and Feronia as well, and they talked and acted very much like a married couple, to all appearances. But Mother Nature is a hard person to deny over-long.

Now, on the morning on which he had been with the witch-maiden for a year, Druga arose to find no longer his accustomed soft Turkish trousers on the chair by his bed, but instead a coat of Frankish mail, a scimitar of polished but antique appearance, and certain other richly ornamented gear such as was worn in the lands about the City of Armora.

The bat-winged and retiring attendants clothed him in these things, and clanking like a tub full of kitchenware, Druga went down to breakfast.

"What is all this iron-mongery about, Feronia?"

"Today you have been with me a year, and as you know if you ever read a romance, at the end of every year you must go out and do a *deed*. Besides, I hate Dionaea, and you have a certain job to do for Mors which cannot possibly be put off a day longer, or she will lose her patience with you, and you know what that could mean. You don't want to wither, do you?"

"There is sense in that, Feronia."

"I am glad you recognize it. You can't think of any Words to take the place of effort, can you?"

"Not when you say that word, *wither*. But tell me, Feronia, just what do you expect of me?"

"You will go to Dionaea, saying that you are an ambassador from the Prince of the East Forest, the Lord of the Sun's Birth, the King of All Shady Places. You will allow her to assign you rooms in the palace after you have

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

given her the gifts from this mythical King. After that, if she does not allow you to seduce her, you will take by force what she will not give you of her own free will."

Druga dropped open his mouth. "You say 'seduce.' Whatever can you mean?"

"You just let me catch you at it, is what I mean. You will get her to tell you where she has concealed the three objects, and you will take them in the night and bring them here. Then we will both return them to Mors, for I want to meet that Mother of Things As They Should Be."

"Mors is the Ruler of the Night!"

"When else are things as they should be, except in total darkness?"

"Some fine things happen in the dark, at that. But certain undesirable things wait till darkness to happen, as well."

"Never mind your talk. Get on with the Deed, Druga, and while you are there, there is a certain *remote-control* called the Lamp of Sulieman, or Aladdin's Glimmer, a device which is designed to fit certain machines I have here, as well as those the Queen has hidden under her castle."

"*Remote control device,* you say. Whatever can that be?"

"It won't be any use to you or to me if she catches you stealing it, and you get your head properly chopped off. So don't go opening your big yap about anything but the loveliness of Dionaea's complexion, and the captivating way her hair is done. Remember, never talk to her about anything but the the way her gown hangs upon her figure, or some such small talk."

"That won't be hard."

"With you, it may be. But if you mean a word of it, my little watchers will tell me and I will not have Faith in you, Druga."

"Now, that could never occur, my Feronia."

"And when I do not have Faith in people, Druga, they are apt to Wither."

"Faith shall be my salvation, my word of worship, forever and ever, my Feronia."

"You are learning something about Faith. It is more than a Word, Druga."

"There are words and words, aren't there?"

"An infinite army of words can be overcome by one Deed, Druga."

"Today is the day I must do a Deed."

"Quite!" said Feronia. "It is high time, in Faith."

SO IT was that Druga, now very much changed from his youthful and ingenuous appearance of a a year ago and with his skin a pale rose instead of purple, clattered off on his gray horse once again, still with designs upon the secret possessions of the fair Queen Dionaea. In his mind quivered the faint lightning that flashed ever about the energetic Feronia, as well as hovered a dark and threatening image he recognized as a messenger of Mors, and that one had been waiting overlong, it seemed. But one must prepare for such adventures . . .

## CHAPTER VI

QUEEN DIONAEA reclined in luxurious ease upon her overstuffed throne of carved ebony, though little ebony could be seen for silken cushions. About her hovered a small horde of male sycophants, jockeying for her favor with endless sallies, and listened to but with half an ear by the dozing Dionaea.

It was with a pleasant surprise she learned of the coming of the Ambassador from the King of the Shady Places. Dionaea adjusted her split skirt so as to expose the better portions of her legs, straightened her sprawl into a long-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

posed position which her mirror had guaranteed her to be devastating, and bid the attendant to show in the Ambassador.

Druga advanced to the throne, bowed to the floor, and kissed the small golden slipper of the Queen.

"What hair, what eyes, what a gown, what limbs . . ." Druga was of nature direct, and he had been bidden to say nothing but such small talk.

"That is all very well, and but natural that you should be taken with me, but what of your errand, and I had heard mention of certain gifts you had brought. Are any of these gifts of a magical nature?"

"Are you, too, a student of Magic, most Glorious Queen?"

"Magic is a hobby with me, yes."

"Oh," said Druga, and the queen noticed the V in his forehead. But Druga recovered, for he had not been a married man for a year for nothing, and went on to describe his gifts, which were brought in from the donkey on which Feronia had loaded them, placing with each article a subtle and potent curse. Druga remembered that his ears had burned with the listening.

"A bracelet of Demophile's; you know, the Cumean sybil, a beautiful thing; the King thought you might like it. It is said to render the beauty of the wearer irresistibly potent to the opposite sex."

"That is a very nice gift." Dionaea tried on the glittering bauble, and smiled upon Druga. "Does it work?"

"Quite," said Druga with caution, looking about at the shadows, for he did not want any too enthusiastic remark of his to get back to Feronia. "Undeniably irresistible."

"In that case, perhaps we had better see more of each other."

"A very good idea, O glorious queen. Now, this gift is a sword of ancient workmanship, said to belong to the alchemist and warrior King, Hadranapulis, and possesses the power of making the wearer invincible in battle."

"I wonder whatever become of Hadranapulis?"

"He died of old age, in his bed, according to history. So it may be that the sword, aside from being a superb example of the sword makers' art, has some such magical endowment as is claimed. It is heavily jeweled with the emeralds of Syria, and everyone knows that those stones are good for the gout."

"Never mind the gifts, I'll look at them tomorrow. Come along into my garden and amuse me. I am weary of this business of Queening it, and would like to be a woman for a while."

THEY walked under the mighty branches of the ancient live oaks, and that net dress which the Queen affected let the flesh of her gleam like rosy pearls, and Druga's eyes got crossed trying to ascertain just what she wore underneath, for there was no end anywhere to the pearls. It was just such a dress he had seen her in the first time he had met her, but that was a year ago. If it was the same dress, it had certainly held up well, insubstantial as it was. Druga carefully brought up the subject of magic, and the gifts he had brought had all been designed to give him an opening to pump the queen to this end—"Where did she keep her collection of forbidden objects?"

He almost said it aloud, oaf that he was by nature, but a year had changed Druga from a youth to an experienced married man, and women were not the mystery of indirectness they had once been to him.

"Just why did your ruler send me an ambassador?" The queen was smiling,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but she was also serious, and Druga knew that he had better have a good answer, so he said:

"The King my ruler has need of a fitting bride, and having heard of your beauty and talents, as well as your power, thought that yourself would be a fitting match in so many more ways than one, that he has proffered his suit."

"And do you think I would make a good wife, Oh Ambassador?" Dionaea was still smiling, but her voice had taken on a slightly husky and yet imperious tone, to the end that Druga realized that here was woman unaccustomed to being denied, and that she had decided to sample the man Druga, and there was very little use in his having any other ideas about the matter. So Druga, noting the angry flickering of certain attendant shadows at their feet, did his utmost to lead the conversation away from whatever the Queen was about to propose. And as he opened his mouth to give a lengthy quotation from the Chapter on "Lost Souls, Their Meaning and Condition of Servitude," they both nearly stumbled over a bloody corpse sprawled across the shadowed walkway. The queen stamped her foot.

"That author, he's always leaving those things around! To add mystery to the story—why didn't they give me someone worthy of me. And just when things were getting int . . ."

Druga mopped the sweat from his brow and looked at the corpse with undisguised affection. "Now just what did he do to get himself in that shape, Queen Dionaea?"

"I suppose he is another spy sent by Mors to steal my tools. Only last year I had a purple one thrown from the walls . . ."

Druga mopped his brow again. "And have you been troubled since?" he asked, innocently.

"I don't know; we don't wait to find out now. I have decided that to kill all strangers as soon as they arrive is the only safe way, of course, excepting such accredited messengers as yourself."

"Yes, of course!" agreed Druga heartily. "By all means we must have these interstate messengers and Ambassadors; but *common strangers!* You're quite right, and besides it's so queenly. It must make quite an impression on the strangers, at least."

IN ANSWER to the queen's cry, the body was being carried away, the bloody arms hanging and the gaping mouth dangling horribly. Druga squirmed within his tinkling shirt of mail, and the other war-like accoutrements hanging from him kept up a continuous small chatter of metal about him as though someone were shaking a clothes-tree loaded with pots and pans.

"This Mors who sends these villains to bother you—just why does she bother?" asked Druga, having an inspiration as to how this uncomfortable scene could be turned to account.

"I have certain articles of hers, namely a Brazen Cystrum of large dimensions, a ball-and-sceptre which belonged to the Dark One himself and have great powers inherent in them, and a little glass triangle with the Bell of Charm hanging from it. These things are the greatest part of my magic, O Ambassador whose name I have not bothered to learn."

"Count Druga, Your Highness. Could it be that I will see these wonderful objects which are so sought for that men die to reach them?"

"It could be. Your ruler's gifts must be placed among my collection, and it is in a certain place not easily come

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by. Come tomorrow and I will take you there." And the queen muttered something to herself that sounded like —"And leave you there, haply."

FOR she had been watching the small flickering shadows about Druga's feet, and had formed her own conclusions. So it was that Feronia's suspicious sending of her invisible servants had betrayed Druga, and his friend unwittingly caused his downfall.

Now the next day Druga met Queen Dionaea in the garden of the moss-trailing live oaks, and very disturbing to his youth were her deep mysterious eyes and sullen drooping-lipped mouth and the wonder of her hair and the warm flesh of her, clad as usual in next to nothing that he could observe. But a grimness about her face troubled him, and the eyes she bent so disturbingly on him seemed yet preoccupied and a little sad.

"Come along, Count Druga, and I will show you those valuables which have caused the death of so many seekers. Certainly they are curious enough. You might just carry this little jewel coffer for me; it contains some things I want to place in my vaults."

Now the queen entered a green stone doorway in the garden and Druga followed her, and down an interminable flight of stairs, and out into a vasty cavern, wherein the sound of the sea waves made a terrible and endless roaring by virtue of the echoing nature of caverns. And he followed the queen's soft undulant form, hands full of jewel coffer and heart full of unthinkable desires—unthinkable because still fluttered about his feet those small flickering listening shadows that had inadvertently caused his doom.

"These vaults lie a great way down." Druga's voice was very faintly apprehensive.

"We are almost there. Now that there is no one about, I want to tell you that I have plans for you, if you see things my way. I have a great admiration for that strong body of yours and a hearty respect for your . . . shall we say, your personality. Now if you will wait right there, no, just a little to the left, you will soon have a very great surprise indeed. And if you wish, you may kiss me first."

Druga, suspecting Feronia would forgive him a kiss or two, was nothing loath, and embraced all that soft immortal pillar of lovely, mysterious and dreadful womanhood and planted his lips on hers a bit more firmly than necessary. And as he did so, she made a swift movement against the rock-rough wall with her hand, and his feet went out from under him, and he plunged down, down, to land with a thud on something vaguely like mouldy straw—but which slithered away from his feet, hissing. The queen's voice came mockingly down to him, ". . . And you can tell Feronia her Count Druga is no better than the purple one she sent. And I give you pleasant dreams, Count Druga, and hope you enjoy that bed more than my own. It is a strange choice to make, for one who could have had the latter."

NOW rapidly Druga leafed, in his mind, from the chapter on "Political Logic in the Present Day," to the chapter on "Impossible Predicaments," and in his memory as he looked through the pages of "Wisdom," found nothing but words describing "Chimerical Monsters Said to Exist in Subterranean Places for Which There Is No Proof"—and his eyes became accustomed to the gloom, he hoped that that hopping, great-mouthed, slobbering thing was not a Proof. But as it bore down upon

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him all too voraciously, he drew, and with one fell stroke bent his sword at right angles to the handle.

Now, lying crushed beneath the vast weight of a seeking mouth empowered by great limbs and a vast weighty body to hold him while the mouth had its desire of him, Druga quietly made his peace with the motionless God-upon-the-river-bank - who - never - did - anything-and-swore-he-never-would. And as the *mouth* mumbled at the sturdy armor of proof which Feronia had given him, Druga thought of the fair purple limbs of his Darlene, and wondered if it would not have been wiser to have enjoyed happiness while he had it rather than to have gone seeking Wisdom. For now that he had wisdom he found it was of no use whatever in dealing with the Problems of This World.

Now Druga by a mischance of his futile struggling and writhing, chanced to turn the thing over upon its back, and found to his surprise that like a turtle, it could not get upright again. Which was a very fine thing, and worth more than Wisdom to learn.

Straightening his sword within the vitals of the thing, Druga endeavored to ascertain the Latin name of the Thing, the species and other scientific details of the beast, but nothing in his study gave him any clue. Besides it stunk, and Druga began to explore the chasm into which Queen Dionaea had cast him.

It was a great room, with smooth polished walls reaching up and up, and no doors or furniture except the gnawed bones of a great number of previous guests of the Queen's hospitality.

Besides the great dead body of the monster without name or recognizable shape, there were a number of vipers, vividly striped and complete with puffy hoods about the neck.

In fact it was on a coil of these he had landed, or certainly he would have broken a leg. But they had found his mailed boots tough on the fangs, and let him pretty much alone.

A few days later Druga gave up his distaste for stinking monsters, and began to eat the ripening carcass of his late antagonist.

Mumbling over the unsavory bones, Druga muttered—"If these Witches and Goddesses and other forms of female life I have been encountering had any sense they would furnish a man with a wishing ring or some such simple device for getting out of such holes."

The flickering shadows at his feet now evinced some interest, one of them saying, "Why don't you send me for Feronia? You're the one without sense. Nowadays they call such things atomotors, or teleports or levitators or materializers. Simple wishing rings aren't satisfactory. Times change, Druga."

"Yes! Feronia is right. A man has to study science to be a magician these days. Or to understand a witch. By the way, technically speaking, just what are you?"

"Well, in the good old days they called me a Hob and let it go at that. Or Hob-goblin when they felt formal. Nowadays they have to call me an illusion, caused by psychic trauma, or a neuroses, or some other mysterious twaddle."

"What does Feronia call you?"

"Tom. We're old friends of Feronia's. We worked for her when the planet was alive, before the Mother went to sleep, when the God was young and energetic. Everything has pretty much deteriorated, though, latter years."

"Do you know anything about Mors, or about the Red Dwarf, or why my people are purple and these others pink-and-white? Do you know what to do to get out of here?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Maybe I do and maybe I don't. You never did me any favors."

"Now don't get temperamental, Tom. We're in a pickle."

"You're in a pickle. I'm not. I can go home any time I feel like it."

"You wouldn't leave me here? What would Feronia say?"

"There *is* that to worry about, Druga. Well, to begin with, Mors is a Universal Goddess, but she has representative bodies on each of the habitable planets. No one ordinarily believes in people like Mors, until they have dealings with them. She hardly ever comes to this planet, because it's pretty dead here. But when something happens to one of her bodies anywhere, her big central intelligence out in space knows it, and she comes and animates her body on that planet.

"THAT'S why that vampirous beauty decided not to eat me, and suddenly turned into Mors. Now I understand!"

"Exactly. The Red Dwarf is something like Mors too. He has a lot of bodies on different planets, and they all make records for his central intelligence, not being endowed with memory like Mors, he has to read the books to know what's going on. But the Red Dwarf is an awful liar."

"Just what I thought."

"It's the same with Dionaea, and Diana. They exist simultaneously in the complex repetitious multiplicity of worlds called the life-universe. One day she is here in this body and the next over here in another. But they are different. Now, Diana, she is a little crazy, hates men, and all that. She is plenty cracked if you ask me. She's the one . . ."

"Yeh, she's the one that made me old! And Mors made me young. And she and Dionaea are the same person. In certain ways they are, but actually they are different. She just has a contact with Dionaea, and sometimes she inhabits Dionaea's body and sometimes she doesn't. In between times, Dionaea is a rare baby, if you understand. The next thing you know, she's a man-hater, and Diana has come back to the old home plate. See what I mean?"

"I understand a great deal now that was not clear before. I might go to bed with Dionaea, and wake up with Diana, and her the kind that kills a man for taking a look at her without her clothes on. Exactly. She is cracked!"

"Moreover, she steals things. Kleptomania. And she hides them, and the Goddesses and Gods can't find them again. Get it?"

"So they send me, thinking I can get it for them. Why?"

"Because you are unimportant, and Dionaea would not get suspicious and summon her mistress, and you might get away with it. That's all."

"Well, now that is all queered. She saw you fluttering around my feet acting like a shadow, and she figured out what was what, and the jig was up, and we're down here. And instead of doing something, you go to sleep on me. Now *do* something!"

"What's the use, as far as you are concerned. You haven't got the three objects, and when Mors finds out you failed, she'll make you old again, and that will be the end of you."

"Then you think I have to get the three objects to stay alive. Might as well lay down and die right now."

"That's why I didn't try anything. It didn't appear to be any use."

EVERY day Dionaea came and looked in upon her captive. Every day when Druga heard her footsteps above, he rubbed out the pentagrams

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and symbols with which he had been vainly trying to summon a little help for himself, and lay down, groaning and moaning as if very sick. But Dionaea did not take pity, but only taunted him—saying—"Oh Druga, how do you like my bed and board. You were not enthusiastic about my bed, but surely you have no fault to find about my board?"

"Have mercy, beautiful Queen, I perish of starvation. Besides this cave is giving me arthritis . . ."

"You're not near dead yet, you big strong man, you! I may yet relent you know. Now, beg prettily . . ."

So Druga, nothing loath, would beg prettily, or would try stony silence and heroic fortitude—neither of which seemed to impress Dionaea. Indeed she had no intention of letting him out.

One of these times, Druga, after prolonged thought, said this to Dionaea:

"Isn't it true, that if your occasional inhabitant, Diana, the omnipresent and virulent man-hater that she is, ever caught you sleeping with a man and violating your vows of continence—she would visit upon you a dire revenge for so flouting her law?"

"That is quite true, Druga. We who serve the boyish Diana Triformis love her alone, and are not supposed to have other affections of any kind."

"Yet, in the beginning our unfortunate friendship, did you not openly entice me toward yourself?"

"Well, you are a large and attractive male. How could a woman help showing a little of her nature?"

"As I recall, when I first saw you, a great deal of your nature was showing. But I have a plan whereby you can circumvent this selfish and cruel Mistress of yours."

"Call her by such names, and I'll not listen."

"Nevertheless, even she might be fooled. Suppose, instead of this charnel house you have dropped me in, you had built in your own chambers a closet, properly fitted with chains and other uncomfortable devices to impress your Mistress and to constrain me against my natural desire for freedom. Then, when Diana is present in your body, she would think nothing of my presence, for she knows that she hates me, and she will think that you must also have conceived an aversion for myself. Meanwhile, when she is away, the mice could play."

"You think to coax me into letting you into a more favorable position for an escape and for the stealing of my few treasures. Well, little man, your idea will turn into a device whereby I can have the pleasure of a helpless man under my feet, and yourself will take no advantage of that, because I will see to it that you don't. Consider your plan advanced one step, and some years in the future, you will die in those chains, for I shall never release you. I am not the weak, lustful creature you seem to think."

"Anything is better than this black hungry solitude, my Dionaea."

"We will see, my Druga. And remember, when I say *my* Druga, it is really so, for there is nothing you can do about it."

"We will see," muttered Druga to himself. But a few days later, when Dionaea had installed him in a tall oaken closet in her bedroom, with a stout iron-barred door with a few holes for air, and had placed about his limbs unconscionable numbers of heavy links of metal, he groaned, admitted defeat. No one could get free from these chains and this so-called woman.

NOW Dionaea spent many hours sitting before the open door of this closet, contemplating her captive, taunt-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing him with her nearness and the exposure of her limbs and self to him, and with his own inability to harm or do otherwise to her. The details of this torment are not exactly fit to print, for Dionaea was of a peculiar turn of mind, caused by her wide knowledge of the rather dissolute ways of the Gods whom she knew through her servitude to Diana Triformis, and she was a confirmed tease, if so mild a word may be used. But History has noted that characteristic in more than one queen. But in truth, through Druga she felt she was striking at Mors and Feronia, and women have a way of hating other females, as accomplished or more so than themselves.

Among other things, she continually showed him succulent morsels of food and female Devils of the more erotic forms, and allowed these conjured solidific appetites to have their way with Druga while she watched, so that in time he became somewhat anaemic from loss of blood.

While Druga functioned as an entertaining piece of furniture in Dionaea's bedroom, Feronia watched the whole thing through her crystal vision globes, and fumed a bit, and plotted dire vengeance on the too-successful witch, Dionaea.

"Queen, and holding my man captive. She does not know what I have gifted him, luckily. There is a deal she does not know. And I will, before the three great Dark curses of humanity, before the Dark Spirit himself, I vow, have my spite vented on that female fop, the wriggling soft-bodied thing that she is—I'll make her squirm in truth—may the Gorgons devour her . . ."

So cursing, Feronia would repair to her laboratory in a fury, and her dark face set in grim determination, would work at a terrible sending she meant to have descend upon the head of Dionaea. But there was this about it, if Triformis Diana found out where it came from, later, it would mean the death of her, and if it should occur to intercept one of the Triform's visits from hyper-space, there would be Furies uncountable after her blood. For the green-sunned planet abounded in unnamable relics, still living from the fecund, gigantically talented past, when life itself had been a tool in the hands of Necromancers and technologically inclined Sorcerers who had created undying phantasms innumerable, which still lurked in all surrounding multi-space, waiting a call from their no longer present masters—and these could be summoned and used by and of the ancient blood. Of these were few, but these circumstances made them formidable beyond Feronia's comparatively youthful power, herself being only in the second thousand years of synthetic life.

NOW, one evening when our lovely Dionaea was employed as usual with poor Druga's somewhat emaciated self, there was a whirling of the great rich bed chamber, a draft of the terrible cold from hyper-space, and Dionaea's face lighted up, for this was the sign that her patron Triformis Diana was about to enter.

But through that mystic opening stepped no Diana with her muscular boyish legs, her lion and panther on leash, and mystic bow with which she slew her male admirers and various other unfortunate game she encountered. No, Dionaea, no, screaming and hiding your face will not help. For a black cloud stepped from that terrible opening, and flames licked at the edges, and there stood that half visible, serpentine and frightening, terrifyingly grand visage of Mors topping that black cloud of obscurity that betokened

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her still holding her grip upon the vast reaches of night everywhere. Druga cried out in gratitude—

"I knew you'd come, Mother Mors, I knew it."

But Mors had little time for Druga, only striking off his chains as she said to Dionaea, "There is no use your expecting the Triform daughter of Jupiter, for I have fomented a battle on another planet which will keep her busy protecting certain Temples of hers for some time. Now, produce the objects that I want, and you may yet live."

"You dare not kill me, and I dare not give them up. Your errand is useless!"

"We will see."

With which words Mors' figure began a strange awesome swirling, the swirl settled about Druga, and all at once she was nowhere to be seen. But Druga's now bony weakened body became alert with a terrible purpose and a bulging, electric something seemed to inhabit his form. He picked up from the wall his sword, where Dionaea had hung it to torment him with the sight of it, and advanced upon the still seated, now frightened and crouching Dionaea. Her half-nude state and imploring eyes did not seem to register upon Druga, for he lopped off her head with one stroke. The head rolled bouncing out the door, and could be heard bounding down the long flight of steps out side. Weariness now came back to Druga. The dark swirling power left his form, and he nearly collapsed as Mors' support left him. She bustled about the chamber, picking up certain objects, unlocking the great vault with the keys taken from the headless neck of the still gore-spouting body, and Druga merely leaned against the wall and watched the mystic terrible beauty of her helplessly.

From the vault Mors took the brazen cystrum, the ball and sceptre which once belonged to the Dark One himself, and the little glass triangle with Bell of Charm. As she once again began to cause the weakening, terrifying opening of the Door into Hyper-Space, and the awful cold sank into Druga's weakened body, he said—

"Feronia asked me to get her the remote-control-device called Aladdin's glim-box, whatever that is. Can you show it to me before you go, O mighty Mother of the Night."

"I am the Daughter of Night, and not the Mother, in case you don't know. And as to Feronia's remote-control-device, it is that little lamp-like affair with the dial and knob on the top, and it is built to activate certain ancient hidden mechanisms from a distance. Why don't you take it if you want it, why bother me?"

"The problems of a poor failure of a mortal like myself may be of little moment in your divine endlessness of existence, Mors, but there remains the small matter of getting out of this city in my weakened condition, and though I have signally failed in your service, I assure you I meant as well as a man may by you . . ."

"OH, STOP the words, you educated people are all alike, talk, talk . . ."

"Then you do think of me as an educated man? I had thought otherwise, Daughter of the Night, and from what I can see of you, Night must be proud of her daughter, too."

"You are educated in the sense that you have been fool enough to spend the precious days of your youth with your nose between a set of book covers, and those same books written by the greatest fools on the planet, who could never have found food to fill their mouths had not someone provided. You are educated in the sense that whatever

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wits mother Nature endowed you with at birth have been perverted and overlaid with a vast heterogeny of useless data, of unnecessary detail, of false truths which your mind can do nothing with but make endless mistakes as to what comes next in this short life which must be all *do* and little else. For it is such a mess from the past fumblings of other idiots like yourself that there is no living in it for anyone but someone who learned *how* an age ago from living masters, and not from books, for a book can tell you no more than the images associated with words can convey. Educated, Yes! Druga, you cannot do any simple duty correctly without a deal of extraneous and false reasoning about it, and ending up by completely bungling. Why yes, you are undoubtedly educated. Didn't Feronia tell you?"

"I seem to recall some remarks of hers to that effect. But after all, O mighty Mors, if I am not educated truly, but only falsely fooled into a sense of having wisdom which does not exist for such as me—it is not my fault, but the fault of a set of conditions over which I had no control. You can hardly blame me, Mors. Did I not pass your creature, that so-charming serpent-woman of the Cavern of Wisdom, as I was on my way to the Three Books of Knowledge. Did she not let me pass, and even grasp after me with her extremely charming talons as if to hurry my steps. Now, Mors if you knew those books contained only useless and extraneous matter in no way connected with an actual conquering of the detrimental physical conditions which make our life the futile sterility it is—why did you not stop me and guide me aright—toward a source of wisdom better calculated to teach a man to live long and grow healthy upstairs as well as in the muscles. Mors, after all. . ."

THE terrible whirling shadow of darkness stopped for a moment before Druga's pale face, even paler rose-colored than Feronia had made it, and looked pityingly down upon him. "Bungler, you have yet a way with you, and a woman's heart must ever open to such a child as you. . ."

With which words the terrible whirling that was her body or her power or a hole in space or a space-warp, or some other nonsensical term manufactured to circumvent the truth that magic is magic and will always so remain beyond the ken of mortal man—this terrible mysterious and freezing blackness reached out to him and gathered him in, and suddenly Druga was fast asleep upon the soft breast of the Daughter of the Night, and those never-seen breasts of hers were welcome feeling to his worn and drained body, and into him flowed strength like the milk of many God-like mothers, so that as he slept he dreamed, and the dream was that he slept upon great breasts more lovely than any mortals, and that he suckled at those breasts as would a babe-in-arms.

He dreamed that the strange dark milk he suckled was the opposite of the milk of madness which had been fed him all his life, that with that terrible dark strength of the far-off terrific life of dark space's infinitudes that flowed into him flowed also that strange wisdom called common sense, or horse sense, and that a centaur smiled down upon him from the stars as he thought that strange thought. And he knew that what he had now was wisdom, that did not come from books, but from a mental health which was brother and the same as physical health, and can come only from proper food, as physical strength can come only from proper food. And that food is never to be found in books, but only in the dark

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

depths of the night, and then only by a man gifted with the strength to seek for it in fearful death-depths of blackness amid awesome frightenings from terrible truths that make a man's frame to shudder and collapse unless he be truly a man. And Druga slept for a long time beneath the wide sparkling smile of Mors, the Daughter of the Depths of the Bowels of Night. Druga knew that wisdom is a seeing and knowing vastly different from the seeing and knowing inherent in the absorbing of mere words written on paper. For when the deep, vast nourishing vibrations of spatial energy throbbed through his brain, he could understand and think as a God—and all his previous thinking was exactly like a man trying to swim and choke to death at the same time; he succeeded only in drowning.

SO IT was that wisdom came at last to the seeking Druga, from the breasts of the daughter of night, from the vibrant spinning strengths of two great beauteous breasts that were not breasts but were vortices of strange magnetic and nourishing force—and when that energy flowed vibrant and penetrating all through him he learned that food and wisdom are both misunderstood of ordinary men and wisemen and Necromancers everywhere—for wisdom comes from the power to think, and not from study at all—wisdom comes from a breathing throbbing energy that flees through the halls of the mind exactly as electricity flees through a copper wire in Feronia's "laboratory".

And in his strange mystic sleep Druga smiled up at the mothering daughter of Night, saying, "Oh Mors, now I know how futile is man's search for wisdom—for he needs first a receptacle, and second he needs strength to fill the receptacle and he needs thirdly the vibrant food of energy flows denied him ordinarily, and all other methods of obtaining wisdom are fallacious."

"Quite," agreed the vast rushing body of Mors, and space flashed past her speeding self, and Druga nodded sleepily upon her broad breast and noted the worlds of space and the flaming suns of death and the suns of youth and the suns that are neither, but spawn only horror.

"Where are we going, O woman who is more lovely than a snake, and Snake that is more lovely than a woman—O Mors who are too much for me to think of all at once, where are we going?"

"We are returning to a past time, that day that you left a small orchid colored body called Darlene upon the flower-strewn grass beside the stream where the God-who-never-moves-and-swears-he-never-will still lies awaiting what can never be for him."

Druga nodded happily, saying"—Feronia will be very angry, but perhaps it is wiser if she never sees me again. For I truly love Darlene with a youth's clean love—while with Feronia love is sandwiched between a Necromancer's text and an alembic. Besides, though I have the greatest respect for her dark self, I do not truly love her."

"So long as I am taking you, I might as well take you where you want to go."

"That is probably wisdom."

SO IT was that Druga awoke upon the flowered grasses above the purple and poisonous sands of a strange pink river. Turning his head he noted a tall, supple girl not far off, who was squatting before the face of the stony unmoving God. The green-bright rays of the sun warmed him luxuriously, he stretched and called—"Darlene, I have returned."

"Silly, you haven't been away."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Why I have! And I have brought you that thing you wanted, wisdom!"

"I never wanted any wisdom. It is you I love, Druga. If I had wisdom I might know better."

"You have something there," agreed Druga for within his mind now functioned a dark and terrible little cloud of truth, and forevermore he must face that knowing alone. And Druga laughed and clasped the orchid luxury of flesh and laughter and bright eyes and soft lips that was Darlene, and something of the pain of knowing was taken from him.

For Druga knew that he must wither and die, and lovely Darlene must grow hideous and die, and all his knowing how to avoid the matter would not help, for there was nowhere anyone to help him with the work.

Druga knew that the immortals are not, not good, hiding their wisdom of life from men's eyes forever, and struggling forever among themselves over the wrecks of worlds, and wasting their endless lives with mystic nonsenities, and that a man's short life might contain more wisdom than the endless life of one of these false Gods that hedged humanity about.

And Druga knew that the knowing he had of this thing was not true, but that there was a falsity about everything which was hidden from the eyes of all ordinary men, and that he himself might know how to refrain from dying or withering, but that he could in no way impart this knowledge to another, for they lacked a proper brain receptacle for the wisdom.

And Druga bewailed the loss of Feronia's laboratory and her mystical books of Magical Formulae, but knew all the time that though even she might defeat the withering for a time, still in the end death would get her.

And in the end Druga met death, and as she gathered him up in her soft black arms, Druga was heard to say—"Oh, Mors! Now understand you and your mother."

The great stone God watched Druga go into Mor's dark arms, and his stone eyes saw only a skeleton and a scythe and a long black swirling like a robe of awful force. And he heard Death say —"Yes, Druga, Mors and Death are the same. To live you must die."

"Now that is *not wisdom!*" Druga was heard to reply, the listening God noted this reply for it was astounding to him, who had always wondered about this question and feared to learn. "Wisdom cannot be a contradiction To live cannot be to die."

"THEN why did you not conquer death, Druga?"

"Mors. I knew how, and Feronia knew how—but somehow everything happened so wrong for both of us, and you separated us with your talk of love —and it just all came out wrong. I could not seem to surmount the technical difficulties alone . . ."

"Do you know where you are going, Druga?"

"Yes, Mors. I go into the universal hopper where all blunderers go, to be made over into other things."

"Quite," agreed Mors. "It isn't poetry and it isn't love—but blunderers who do not realize that death is NOT everlasting life must go through the mill of the Gods of the Universe, and they grind exceeding fine, and no ego survives to confuse the next life-product."

"Mors, give me one more chance. You have given me two already, give me one more chance?

"Three is lucky, Druga, and you had ever a face to turn a woman's foolish head. I can afford to be tender hearted once in awhile, who have been not so

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to many—not so at all!"

SO IT was that Druga awakened after a time within a vast and multiplex and translucent walled chamber of mystery and magical work, and standing beside him was a strong loined witch-maid, well constructed, on the whole. Deep-breasted, hers was a figure calculated to wisely fulfill Mother Earth's behest toward fertility. Likewise her long hair contained strange magic in its clinging curved depths, and some invisible power breathed about her, as though a being manufactured out of strange singing music pulsed her strong beautiful life ever through her, and magical vibrant flickerings went with her every movement as she glided toward Druga's recumbent form, saying:

"Get up, you handsome lazy-bones, the work is getting undone at a great rate."

Druga bounded to his feet, sure of himself and his wisdom at last, and he said—

"Feronia, a man can be a loafer and a fool but he can learn. Hereafter I am going to show you what love and effort are, and we shall together conquer this withering and aging that make men fearsome wrinkled monkeys that can never think, because their fathers were fearsome wrinkle monkeys with plague."

"You have been far places in your dreams this night, my Druga!"

"Aye, my witch-maid, I have been far paths in the arms of Mors, and strange things she has shown me. For me there is no other maid nor woman nor attraction but yourself, and for me no labor but your labors, and for me no studies but your study. No books, no fallacious columns of fools' reasonings, but only tried things in your laboratory shall ever again lead me to think I have learned."

"Well then, kiss me, caress me hurriedly, and we will eat our morning meal and to work."

So it was that Druga became a grimy workman who slaved away his life and his youth for a witch-maid, and in time they won the true method of fighting the terrible withering plague of age from their retorts and their alembic and test tubes. And Druga learned wisdom—"Hard work, if directed wisely toward a valuable end, may in time bring rewards."

It is whispered that the nights Druga spent in the studious witch-maid's arms were vastly more heated and productive of pleasure than those spent by other men in the arms of less industrious devotees of love. For Feronia brought to everything she did the same application which had won her wisdom.

There are those who hold that wisdom and love are opposites. There are those who hold that Science and superstition are not related.

But there is a well known individual named Shaver who holds that wisdom, love, science, superstition, religion, life —are all words obscuring with their useless variance a thing that is identical.

The complexities of thought caused by the incomplete and erroneous use of words is appalling. For instance, once upon the time beyond times there was a strange fat creature called a Red Dwarf, who wrote in a large book with the end of his tail, this tale.

*Looking over his shoulder I saw that he was writing—"The End of the Tale of the Red Dwarf"*

*The sub-script stated that: "In my search . . . for wisdom . . . my direful, inescapable Red conclusion is that it is not in existence upon this planet." So, Farewell.*

*The Red Dwarf's*
*Tale's END*

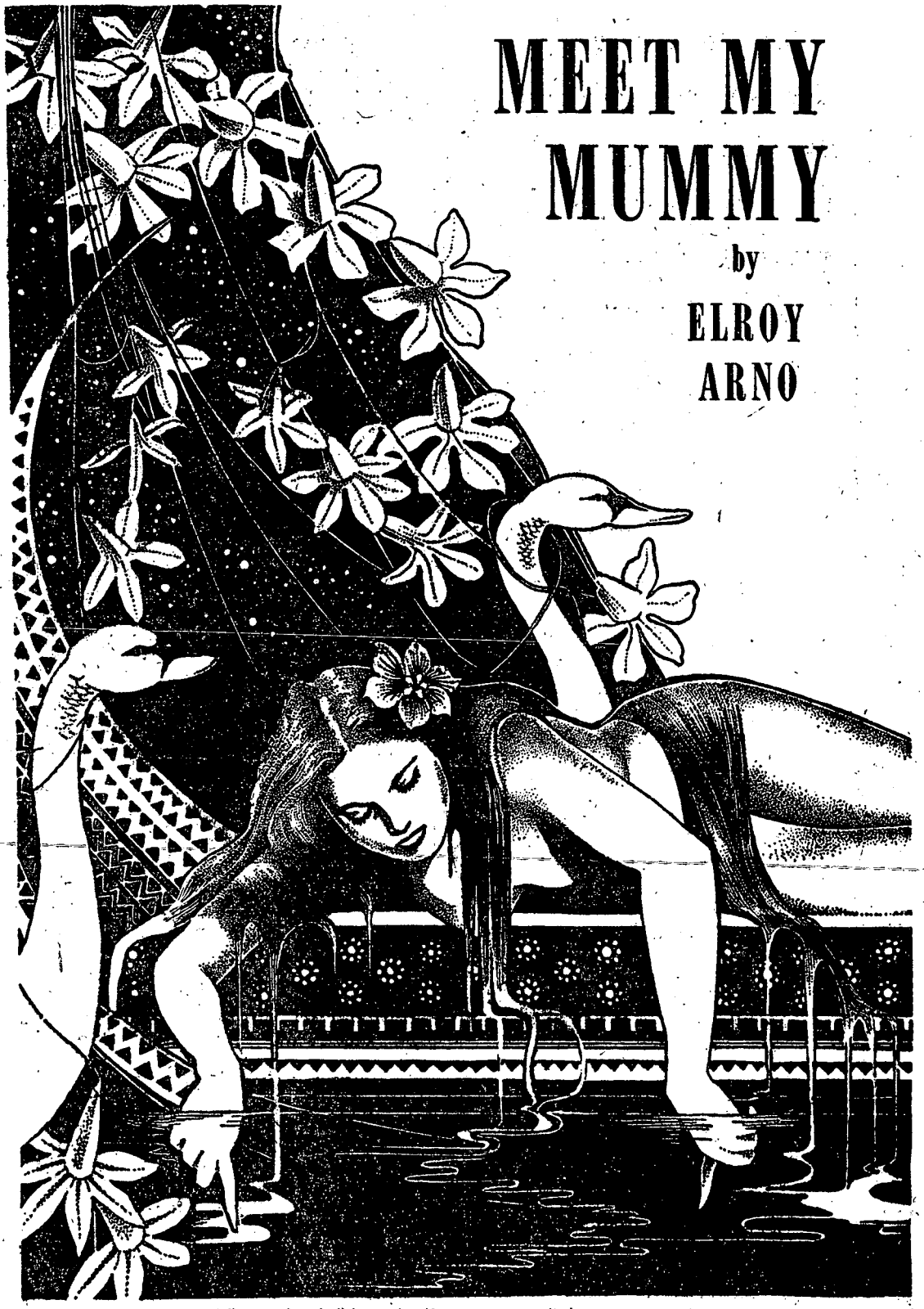
* * *

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# MEET MY MUMMY

by

ELROY ARNO

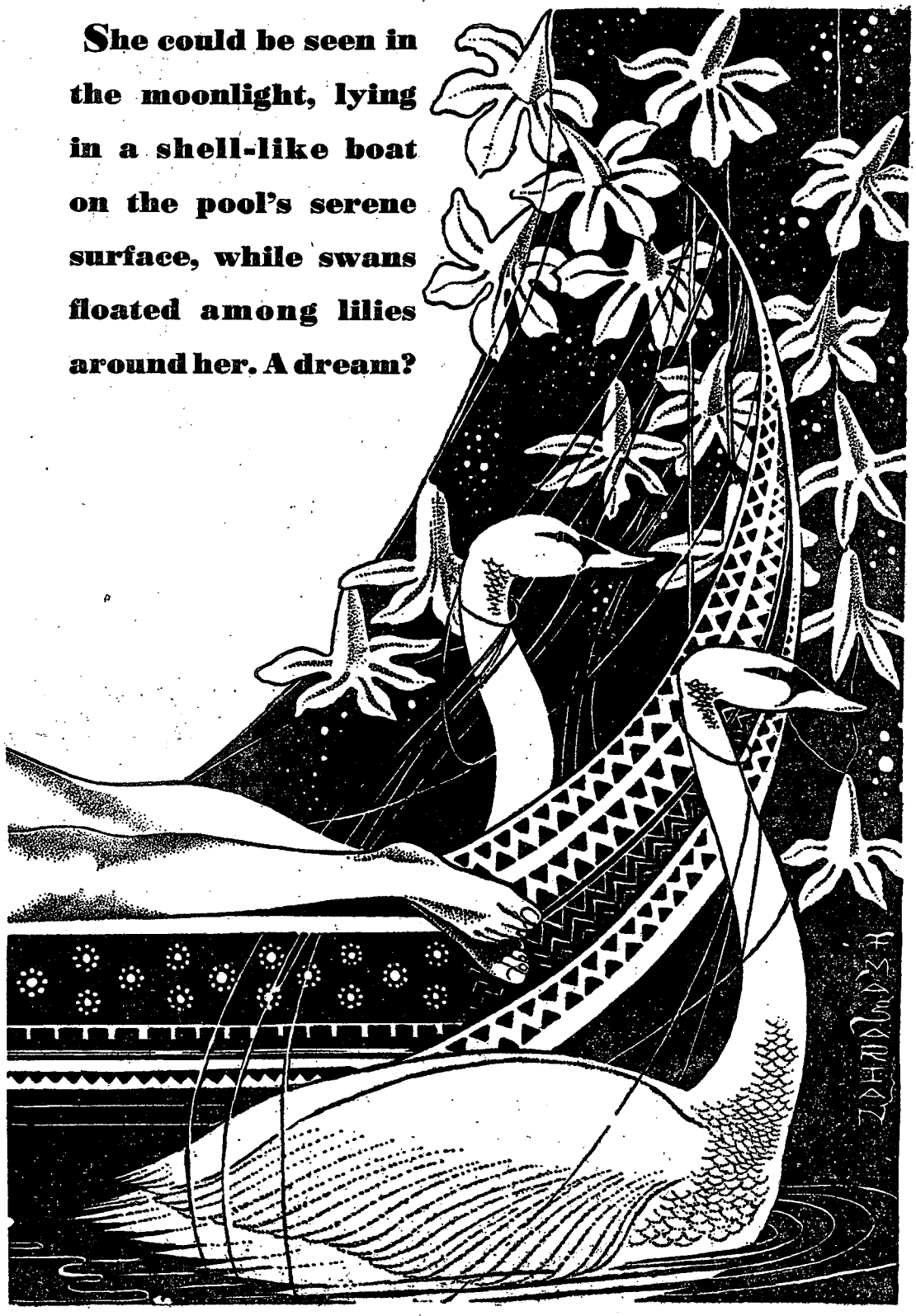


She rested gracefully on the shell-boat, her fingers tracing little patterns in the water . . .



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She could be seen in the moonlight, lying in a shell-like boat on the pool's serene surface, while swans floated among lilies around her. A dream?





PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE Intellect had both his feet up on the desk top, a cigar clamped between his teeth, hands folded across his chest. He said:

"Well, don't stand there holding the door up! The hinges are strong enough. Come in."

The Intellect is a nice, friendly name for the boss, Larry Haynes. Haynes runs a two man agency that handles confidential investigations. I'm the number two man. He runs the agency and I run my feet into the ground, coming in sometimes with results, more often, with corns. I eased myself down on the edge of the desk, doffed my hat and rubbed a wet, irritated crease around my head where the sweat band had cut in.

"I'm quitting the Vaney set-up," I said. "Old man Vaney will have to track down his own wife. I think the woman's on the square with him."

The Intellect scowled.

"Forget all about Vaney," he said. "Something new has come up."

I suppressed a moan. That's the way the Intellect works. We never make much money, but we have fun. We skip blithely from case to case, solving very little and eating less.

"Good," I said, and found a cigarette crumpled into the lower basement of my coat pocket. "Good, indeed. And what millionaire is going to remember us in his will for proving that his wife is giving him the runaround?"

The Intellect smiled blandly, tossed a half inch of very bad cigar into the waste basket and trimmed the end of a new one with his pen-knife.

"Calm yourself," he said. "No more divorce cases, not for a while. All you got to do is find a beautiful blond. We get paid a cool ten-grand."

I chuckled, even if my heart wasn't in it. I'm not the light-hearted type as a rule. Corns on the feet and a pocket book without anything to pocket makes me a glum character. The smoothness of my boyish face has long since been erased by wrinkles that spring up in the damndest places.

"I bet on a horse once," I said. "He would have paid fifty to one, if he had won."

The Intellect came out of his chair slowly, and unfolded his six feet of handsome frame. He passed an envelope to me. He stood back, chewed on the new cigar and regarded me with the look of a parent who knows what is good for his son.

"Okay," he said. "*Now* laugh."

I don't believe in fairy tales. I opened the envelope and a five by five photograph fell out. I looked over the girl printed on the glossy side.

"Nice," I said, and shook the envelope. "I don't see any hundred bills in here."

He groaned.

"Take my word for it," he begged. "You find that girl, and we get ten thousand—cash."

I kept on staring into his honest gray eyes. I wondered how often they were *really* honest.

"*We* get ten thousand," I said. "Even split. I get something in advance."

The Intellect and I trusted each other like brothers—and no more.

His face turned red faster than a changing traffic light.

"There will be expenses, of course," he said.

I nodded.

"About a hundred bucks worth, to begin with."

"But I only got one-fifty this morning."

"You're a liar," I said, "but I'll still take a hundred. Do I work today or go home and soak my feet?"

He brought out folding money and slipped me two fifties off the top. I

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thanked him for it and put in into my vest pocket. No use fighting with the Intellect. He pays you what you bleed him for, and as far as cash is concerned, he's anemic.

I LOOKED down at the picture of the girl and kept on looking for some time. She looked right at home in a bathing suit, although there wasn't much room in it. Her picture was taken on a beach somewhere, with a lot of sand and water tossed in for local color. She was spread out in the sun, and what that babe didn't inventory wasn't worth putting on the books.

She had legs, a torso, all the proper curves and some that weren't quite proper. There was a lot of honey colored hair that flowed down her shoulders and acted as a back-drop for a very nice face and two wide, innocent looking eyes. I'd have bet a lead slug that those eyes were blue, though the picture didn't say so. Yes, she was all there, with some interest added to the principal.

After a while, the Intellect took the picture gently but firmly out of my hand.

"You're stout and not as young as you used to be," he said firmly. "Remember that blood pressure. This kind of a dish is too rich for you."

I ignored his insults.

"Half of ten-thousand bucks is mine for finding that?"

He nodded, but it hurt to make the split even. His face took on that "we got business to discuss" expression.

"Her name is Miss Lion," he said. "Miss Neva Lion."

"Queen of the jungle? L-i-o-n, like in lion?"

"Right. It seems that she's got a father who . . ."

"That's funny," I said.

"*You* aren't," he went on. "Shut up and listen. Frank Lion, her father, makes a living digging up mummys."

"His own, or other men's?"

"Mummys from Egypt," he snapped. "Mummys for museums. Get some sense and stop being so damned clever."

"Okay," I said. "Mummys—like in Egypt."

He glared at me and went on talking.

"Lion and his daughter left California a year ago. They came here and bought a ritzy joint out in West Hills."

West Hills is the high income spot of the city. Those subdivided heavens out there even cost money to look at. Nice, though, if you got lettuce.

"Right after they moved here, our client, Mrs. Ruth Ford, stopped getting letters from Neva, Frank's daughter."

"She's got nothing on me," I said. "I never *have* gotten a letter from the babe. Something will have to be done. On top of that, who the hell is Ruth Ford. Where does *she* come in?"

THE Intellect placed his cigar gently on the ash tray, leaned back in his chair and stared at me somberly.

"But go on," I suggested. "I love to see a cart drawn before the horse. Don't tell me anything in an intelligent manner. I couldn't understand you if you talked sanely."

"I'm trying," he croaked in despair.

"Try harder."

"Okay. From the beginning. Ruth Ford is bout forty. She arrived in town today, from California. She's Neva Lion's married sister."

"You're in focus now," I said. "Keep shooting."

"This Ford dame saw our ad in the Times. She came here to talk. It seems that she's tried to get into her father's house to see her sister. They won't let her past the gate. She tried half a dozen times, but there is a tough guy standing guard over the gate of Frank Lion's

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

estate, and he isn't letting his guard down. Ruth Ford got sore and came to us."

"I am puzzled," I admitted. "There are cops in this town, or there were when I broke the speed laws last. Why didn't she go to them?"

He hunched his shoulders.

"I don't know, and for ten grand, we'll do anything she wants us to. What's the sense of telling her there are cops. Maybe she don't know."

"It's crazy," I said. "It smells to high Heaven and none of it makes sense. I guess maybe ten-grand is pretty heavy lettuce."

He sneered at me.

"This Ford woman is worth a million. Nice clothes—nice build."

"To hell with her build," I said. "She's probably as crooked as a Scotchman's cane. I'll take a chance. How does she want me to work?"

The Intellect leaned on his elbows and issued the day's bulletin.

"Go out there and find Neva Lion. I don't care how you find her. Just don't try to make love to her or get yourself killed. I hate to waste that hundred bucks you're carrying on you. When you prove to me and this Ruth Ford that Neva Lion is alive, safe and in good health, we collect."

"Funny about this Ford chicken," I said. "She bothers me a lot. Just because her sister doesn't write letters, she comes all the way from the coast to see if she's okay. The more I worry it around in my mind, the more muddy the water gets."

The Intellect nodded.

"I didn't think about it when she was here," he admitted. "You may be right, though. Look out for dark alleys until we get this thing figured out."

"Sometimes," I said, "your intellect amazes me."

I tossed my cigarette stub on the carpet, made a mental note to sponge another one as soon as I could, and put my hat on. It was still sweaty and uncomfortable.

"The address is 124 Foothill Boulevard," The Intellect said helpfully. "It hadn't ought to be much of a trick to get in."

I smiled at him pleasantly.

"Go back to sleep," I told him. "Rest while you can. Someday I may walk in front of a slug and you'll have to go to work."

I left him resting comfortably, thank you.

ONE Twenty-four Foothill Boulevard was a high wall, made of rock, and stretching endlessly along the left hand side of the street. There was an iron gate with sharp spikes along the top of it. Beyond the gate, I saw a drive winding out of sight up a hill covered with evergreens. The spikes on the gate looks as though they'd tear the devil out of my pants. I thought it over for a while, and decided upon the direct or friendly approach.

I wandered across the street and pressed the bell button on the gate. There was a little rock house behind the wall. A guy came out of it and walked toward me.

I had fifteen feet and a few seconds to look him over. He was about six-foot-three, his face had been run through a meat grinder, and his fists looked like small smoked hams. He didn't come close to the gate. His voice, I'm sure he didn't have any choice in picking it out, sounded like a fog-horn that was doing its worst.

"What you want?"

I didn't want anything—from him. I figured I'd try being a good pal.

"I have to see Miss Neva Lion," I told him. "Her sister asked me to deliver a message to her."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It was the truth, and so help me, I tell the truth until it hurts. *When* it hurts, I stop telling it.

"She ain't here," he said.

"Then I'd like to talk to Mr. Lion," I tried.

He stopped grinning. Anyhow, he wiped off the Frankenstein smile. He acted like he had just tasted blood.

"There ain't anyone coming in," he said. "Start burning shoe leather, Shorty."

There's a name I can't stand. Maybe because it hits so close to the truth. You can call me Shorty if you keep smiling. He wasn't smiling.

"Listen, you ugly imitation of a sewer cover," I said, "When you talk to a gentleman, act like you know it."

I thought he was coming right through the gate without opening it. About that time, someone screamed bloody murder somewhere up the drive. His face went white and he forgot I was there. He turned and started to run, I heard a man's voice shout.

"Hurry, Lester. She's hiding in the woods."

So the battered guy who watched the gate was named Lester? I knew that, and I knew someone was chasing a female through the woods. That sure was an exciting and exclusive patch of evergreens. How I'd have liked to get over the wall.

For a while I thought about calling the cops. Then I remembered the noise they made, coming with their sirens and their big mouths wide open. I decided I didn't want them around, not right away. This was a one-man high wall job. I sauntered along the walk and found a spot where the shrubbery was grown up thick between the outside of the wall and the sidewalk. I slipped into the shrubbery. I heard the high-pitched scream again, on the far side of the wall. I figured as long as a woman can keep on screaming, she's alive and probably in pretty good condition. It's when they're quiet that I get worried.

I tried to scale that wall, fell twice, and the third time, managed to hook my fingers over the top. My full weight hung on those fingers and something was sure trying to make mince-meat of my hands. I let go, held down the urge to yelp like a wounded pup, and sat on the grass—hard.

Through blurred eyes, I examined two hands that looked like something the butcher throws out the back door. Some bright guy had planted a lot of broken glass along the top of the wall. Deep, bloody gashes were all over my fingers. A couple of them looked like they'd be dropping off before I could tie them together.

I had to get hold of a Doc and some bandages. Maybe I needed a splint. I wasn't sure. I went away from there. To hell with the screaming woman. I'd save her after I saved myself.

I was in a very ugly mood. If I had had a baseball bat, I'd have waited for Lester and played a little nine hit game with him. I didn't. I went looking for a doctor who had a pretty nurse.

WHEN the moon shines over West Hills, it isn't just an ordinary shine. It sort of glows and shimmers. That's what so much exclusive real estate does to a poor guy's mind. I never saw such a pretty place.

If I hadn't been carrying two handsful of tape and gauze, I would have appreciated the scenery more. I stood in the shadows opposite the gate and wondered what had happened to the woman who screamed. I wondered if she was still able to scream now. I had done a lot of figuring before I went back to 124 Foothill Boulevard that night. I guessed that the scream probably belonged to Neva Lion, and that maybe

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

she *wasn't* so happy after all. Anyhow, Neva Lion or not, I had a score to settle with Lester. He made me very angry. He was probably the play-boy who stuck all that broken glass into cement on top of the wall.

I didn't ring for Lester this time. I went back to the spot where I had tried to climb the wall that afternoon. I took off my top-coat, which I had worn to hide the junk I was carrying with me. That coat was a sort of wardrobe trunk and packing case for a length of rope, heavy gloves, a small flashlight, a short length of lead pipe and some brass knuckles. Brother, I thought as I removed these loveable objects from the coat, *this is war.*

I hid the coat under the bushes and tried a toss over the wall. Twice the loop in the end of the rope missed and fell back in my face. The third time it caught. I tested it and it seemed strong enough to hold.

I looked up and down the street and it was deserted. I went over the top carefully, and the gloves protected my hands from the glass that had been cemented along the top of the wall. I was puffing by the time I got up there and pulled the rope behind me. The waist line is beginning to sag just a little and can't take much of that stuff.

I hoped there wasn't a tiger trap on the other side, figured there wasn't and jumped. My knees came up under my chin and I damned near knocked myself out.

I was sitting in the middle of a pine thicket, and I couldn't see three feet in any direction. After a while I got my breath back, used it sparingly and started out to explore the place. I went uphill and came out on the drive. I felt as though I might need an Indian guide to help me find the house. Lester could wait until I came back. I was saving the best part of everything for Lester.

The road was a winding affair that took in a lot of scenery. I suppose it was nice if you went for that kind of stuff. I didn't. I was worried about my neck. The house was easy enough to find when I came out into the open. There was about ten acres of lawn so smooth you could play billiards on it. A big pile of bricks and windows stood in the center of this lawn, a square house with a lot of bulk and very little beauy. There were a few windows lighted on the first floor.

I STAYED in the shadows and moved around until I got to the rear of the house. It was in the shadows, because the moon hadn't climbed high enough to floor the whole scene. That was fine. I like shadows. I could see at least a half dozen lighted rooms, though, and I didn't want to move in while the place might be waiting for me. I found a little bench in a rose garden and sat down to wait a while. The roses smelled so nice that I got drowsy and in a very sentimental mood. I must have dozed off.

I dreamed about a rose-covered cutie who came along and spent a few dream minutes with me, running her fingers over my smooth cheeks and smootching lipstick on my mouth. It was all very cozy until I made the mistake of opening my eyes.

Not three inches from my eyes was a very unromantic looking Great Dane. I jumped a couple of feet and wondered how big a chunk of my trousers he'd settle for. The pooch growled and moved back. The growl came up from down deep, like thunder on a quiet night. My hair stood on end but I didn't growl back at him. Finally I decided that I'd better learn to like dogs then and there. I would greet him on the friendliest basis possible.

"Nice pooch." I said. "You're all

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

right, fella'."

He seemed to appreciate my good neighbor policy. He came back and licked my cheeks again. Not that I liked it. I just wasn't in a place where I could afford to be fussy.

He put his front paws on my shoulders and attempted to sit on my lap. There was too much dog for that kind of stuff. I said:

"How about getting down?"

He didn't get the idea so I had to force myself to my feet. The pooch walked around me a couple of times and sat down to wait. I mopped my forehead.

"I got errands to run," I said. "How about scramming?"

He couldn't have regarded me more tenderly if I had been ten pounds of horse meat. I glanced toward the house. All the lights were out now. My wrist watch showed midnight. I had been sleeping for some time.

I could take a chance of going into the house now, if I didn't have to take this overgrown pooch along for company. Damned peoples' watch-dogs, anyhow, I thought. They're always lousing up things.

"Look, sport," I told the pooch. "This isn't for you. You're a nice guy and all that, and I appreciate your company, but you better go back to your bed. It's late and . . ."

I started to move away from him and he moved with me. I stopped and he stopped. He whined softly.

Instantly I was wide awake and looking for trouble. The pooch wasn't so dumb. He sensed trouble a split second before I did. It gave me time to drop flat on my stomach behind a low hedge. A light flashed on up near the house. It made the area for fifty yards brilliant as day. I lay still, the pooch at my side. The light went out again. Someone had been taking a look around the place.

I got to my knees slowly, then went down again. There was a stairway that led under the house to the basement. Somewhere down there a door opened. There was a brief flash of light, then two figures came up and across the lawn directly toward the hedge where I was hiding. I held my breath and wished the pooch would do the same thing. Away from the house, I could see the men quite clearly. Lester walked ahead of Frank Lion. Lion was carrying a girl, and it was a nice, heartwarming little scene. The girl had a wealth of dark hair that flowed all over her shoulders and Lion's. Her face was pressed against his chest and her arms were around his neck. It looked as though he had wrapped a blanket around her, and that was about all.

Once away from the house, and not ten feet from the pooch and me, they paused. I had a pretty good look at Lion. He was clad in a dark silky looking robe and leather slippers. He had some nice clean-cut features and well-combed, silvery blond hair.

Lester seemed to be taking a last look around, and I tried to dig a hole with my belly and crawl into it. If it hadn't been for that hedge, I'd have made an awful big bump on that lawn.

The pooch growled suddenly, and my heart did a double hand-spring and tried to crowd out my tonsils. Lester said:

"The dog is down there by the hedge. Shall I lock him in?"

Lion got a firmer grip on his load and started out in a direction that would take him safely by me, if he didn't look around again.

"Let him go," he said. "You better get back to the gate."

LESTER started back alone. I waited about ten minutes. Far away,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

down in the direction Lion and the girl had gone, I heard voices. I heard water splashing. There was a light that bobbed around down there, reflecting on water.

Fifteen minutes. I didn't like the idea of having Lion and Lester on both sides of me like this. I didn't have any choice. I started toward the light down among the trees. There was a little pool, surrounded by pine trees, and looking a lot as though it belonged right there, nestled between small hills.

I've been blowing my breath for a long time, so maybe you won't believe all of this. I was sober, though, and although this was strictly dream stuff that I was looking at, it wasn't phony. I swear it wasn't, because I'm sober when I write this, and it still seems kind of nuts.

Frank Lion, the man with the silvery hair, was sitting on a little white bench at the edge of this pool. He looked a little drunk and a little as though he was in a trance. He was staring straight ahead of him, toward the water.

The pool itself had a lot of big, yellow water lilies blooming on its surface. Long, climbing vines grew around the edge of the water, and snaked upward into the half dozen willows that seemed out of place in the scene. There were a lot of huge, orchid-like blooms springing from those vines. *They* didn't fit the scenery either. They looked like something dragged out of a jungle dream and replanted in the wrong stage-set.

There was a little boat floating on the surface of the pool, and the boat was shaped like a half-moon. Inlaid gems glistened and radiated color from the outer shell of the craft. I remember in a kid's book, reading about a swan boat, propelled by a lot of ducks with a superiority complex. This was a swan boat, right out of the fairy books. Four snow white birds were towing the shell-like boat slowly across the pool. They were all rigged up in silvery wires that kept them held fast to the thing.

The whole thing gave me a pleasant if slightly crazy feeling that I was staring at a dream. That dream stuff went to my head like a wine, because the girl who rode the swan boat was something to really weave dreams about. Her hair flowed like black silk about her shoulders and her waist. She was high-priority stuff from any angle, but posed as she was with nothing but the blanket of hair trailing about her milk white body, her fingers making little trails as they dipped into the water, she was enough to make the army start home from the South Pacific on water-wings.

She was a peaches and cream edition of something to keep young men from leaving home—if it was her home. She had all the usual eye-filling features—only more so. Her lips were brilliantly red and her eyes, when they lifted and sparkled in the moon-light, might have been glistening rain drops on a very black surface.

I started feeling very warm around the collar, and in the mood for a boat ride. Funny how that girl exercised a hypnotic effect on me. I forgot all about the man seated on the bench, and about Lester, the big stoop down at the gate. Then the pooch growled and I snapped back to my normal little world.

This wasn't any place for me to settle down permanently. Regardless of all the pretty poses the babe assumed, she was nothing but an un-exploded atom bomb to me. She might blow up any time, right in my face.

I wasn't any closer to finding Neva than I had been hours ago. It was time to fold my tent and quietly steal away. I did. I might have made it too, but the pooch, still with me like a shadow,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

growled and got all excited. He made so much noise that Lion sprang to his feet, got a look at me and yelled for me to stop. A small flashlight pinned me down with it's spot and I decided that speed was a necessary factor. I started to run. Something exploded and I ducked, started to look for a tree to get behind, and another shot tore up the turf close to my feet. The last thing I remember was the warm, unpleasant feeling you have when a slug tears a hunk of flesh off the side of your hip. Man, how I had learned to love that dog.

I OPENED my eyes again somewhere on the seventh level of Hell. I could feel the Devil's first assistant, trying to cook me until tender, over a bed of coals. Before I opened my eyes, I made up my mind that someone had rolled me over, pushed a handful of liquid fire into a wound on my hip, and was stirring it in with a barbed hook. I could hear a lot of voices—and finally they all got together and became *one* voice.

"He's all right. I have the slug out." It was Frank Lion who spoke.

His voice was impersonal and professional. I had a vague idea that he was talking about me. I opened my eyes. I closed them again. I was on my stomach, my arms and legs strapped down, staring at a white, brilliantly lighted sheet.

I kept quiet, trying to figure out how I could get out of there and start moving in any direction that would take me away—'way away. Without trying to struggle, I said:

"If I'm alive, and if I'm going to be allowed to stay that way, how about giving me back my hands?"

I heard Lester swearing, and Frank Lion cautioned him against any rough stuff.

"He's weak," Lion said. "I went to a lot of trouble to keep him alive. We can't afford murder now. It's messy and complicated."

I cussed Lion and said:

"Turn me loose, and I'll take care of myself."

He chuckled, and it was a mirthless sound.

"For a little punk, you've got courage."

"Never mind the petty compliments. Wait until my partner starts tearing this place apart looking for me."

I wasn't fooling anyone. Not even myself. I knew the Intellect was home pounding the pillow with every snore in him. They figured I was a lone wolf, and they weren't far wrong.

Lion untied me and I sat up. I layed down again, fast. My hip felt raw and hotter than live steam. My head spun around clockwise about fifty times before I cushioned it on the table again. I wasn't so hot as a hero.

"Pick him up," Lion said.

Lester picked me up with all the tenderness of a mother lion handling her cubs. The procession started to move. We went down a lot of dark halls and Lester dropped me on a bed and went out. They locked the door. I went out too—like a light.

WHEN I came around again, I felt a lot better, in a lousy sort of way. My mouth was full of dirty cotton and my hip felt as though it had been slept on by an elephant. I was in an eight by twelve room with a bed and a chair. There wasn't any window. I worked on the door for an hour, and gave up after trying to pound it down with my bare hands. All I got was some fresh cuts on my hands.

I tried to play smart. I dropped on the bed and played the waiting game. Three—four hours crawled past. Lion

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

came in. He sat on the edge of the bed and offered me a cigarette. Even Lion couldn't make a cigarette taste bad. I sucked at it until the ash burned my fingers.

"Who hired you to come here?"

I grinned in a brotherly manner.

"I came over the wall to smell of your evergreens," I said. "I get lonesome for the woods. I'm part Indian."

He tossed his own cigarette on the rugless floor and pushed his heel down on it.

"I should have killed you last night," he said.

"I'd have died without pain," I said. "I don't feel very good alive."

He had an unpleasant sneer. On him, it looked natural. I'll bet he spent hours in front of his mirror, curling that nice blond hair. I wanted to smash a few of those even, white teeth out of line.

"I'm puzzled," he said.

"Me to. For instance, I'm wondering where you've hidden Neva, after she had the screaming fit yesterday and tried to break out of this joint."

I rocked him back on his heels a little with that crack. His face turned white and he did a lot of searching for the right words to use on me next. After he found the words, he faltered a little getting them out.

"See here," he said, "you saw my daughter last night, down at the pool. Now make sense, will you? If you tell me who you are and who sent you here, maybe we can make a deal. I don't like to get bloody about this. You keep your mouth shut and maybe you'll live awhile."

I played coy.

"I'm the original mystery man," I said. "If my partner, the other man from nowhere, goes down to the office this morning and finds me missing, he's going to know where to look for me. He'll probably bring a flock of cops along to keep him company. Lester is tough, but he ain't *that* tough."

Lion actually smiled.

"Lester is quite capable of taking care of himself. Right now, he's waiting to take care of you, if it becomes necessary."

He wasn't bluffing any more. Personally, I was getting damned sick of his talk.

"The corpse will be found in the garden wearing blue marks around his neck," I said. "Frank Lion will spend some pleasant days in jail, prior to his march down the last mile."

He sprang to his feet.

"Damn you," he snarled, "you won't talk sense. I've got no more time to waste. Are you going to tell me who sent you here, and why, or . . . ?"

"Sure I'll talk," I said. "Tell me where Neva is, and I'll talk—to her. After that, if she's okay, I'll go pleasantly on my way. You can spend the rest of your life looking at that interesting little side-show you like to stage down there on the pool. Nice work you got, if I do say so myself."

HIS fists were clenched, but I had him worried. Lion wouldn't have hesitated to murder me, if he'd dared to. He wasn't soft. He was smart. He knew that without blood on his hands, he still had a way out. Once he murdered, time and the cops would catch up with him. With me alive, the problem was still his and mine.

"I don't know why you want to see Neva," he said. "You saw her last night. She's well and happy. I'll admit the girl has strange habits. It's—it's a little quirk in her brain. She isn't just right. As her father *and* as her doctor, I humor her and keep her protected here where others can't trouble her peace of mind. Don't you under-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stand? Neva isn't balanced, mentally. What you saw last night was the portrayal of a part she plays. She imagines herself a Princess. I make the little act she puts on as real as possible, to keep her from growing violent. It works. She's happy and I'm doing what any father would do."

It was a nice story. I think he had it all worked out—except that the girl on the lagoon had black hair, and little Neva was a blond.

"Sorry," I said. "The babe on the lagoon is a cute customer. She isn't your daughter."

He hesitated, sorry to waste that nice playup on me, yet knowing that he had lost.

"My pal will come through that wall like a bulldozer," I said. "The cops play for keeps. You better let me in on this little game we're playing."

There was a battle going on in the man's mind. His fingers got all twisted up in his hair and he worried them down across a drawn face. He looked like a lion tamer with a new cat in the act. One that he wasn't ready to handle. He stood up and said:

"I think you're a madman, and I don't know why I humor you. However, if after seeing my daughter, you'll shut up and get out—and *keep* your mouth shut, maybe we can do business without a gun."

I gathered my wits up with as much speed as I could, because I didn't really think he was going to play my kind of ball at all. We left that room as friends, each wondering when the axe would fall.

THE house was all right. There was a lot of it, some of which I saw on the trip down three flights of open stairs into a huge lounge. I backed up to a fireplace big enough to roast a stuffed ox, and looked over the layout. Lion left me there and went away on a little trip of his own.

"I wouldn't try playing clever," he told me. "If you stay put and on your good behaviour, it may pay off. Otherwise, the finish will not be so pleasant."

I wasn't very scared of him now, but after all, I did want to see Neva Lion, and why should I toss the opportunity out the window. I wandered around among the davenports and richly comfortable chairs. Some collection of knick-knacks.

Five minutes passed, and me without a smoke. My nerves became edgy. Then Lion came back, and at his side, her arm about his waist, was Neva.

That photograph wasn't even a good advertisement for the real thing. Neva Lion smiled at me in a sleepy, disturbed manner. Lion said:

"This may puzzle you, Neva. I'm going to introduce you to a complete stranger, let him talk to you, and then hope that he'll go away and stop troubling us. Frankly, it makes very little sense even to me."

He had either done a lot of talking to the girl before he brought her in, or she was too damned dumb to care who I was or what I wanted. I felt prickly heat all over my body. This was a situation that troubled me all the way down to the foundation. If this part of Lion's little act was on the level—I was a damned fool at best. It was actually none of my business how he lived or who he chose for companions. If Neva was okay, I was a sneak thief, a prowler, a fool, and deserved to be shot.

I said:

"Miss Lion, a friend of yours asked me to call on you and ask if you were well. This friend had reason to think that you were in trouble."

I was watching her closely for some signal, if she wanted to give one. There was a lot of stuff written between the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lines in this little show and I hoped to untangle some of it. The girl gave me a nice, if slightly impatient smile.

"I think you'll understand if I agree with father. This whole scene *is* a little insane, isn't it? Of course I'm all right. I'm quite happy, and will be, even if you are forced to cut your visit short. Do you understand that, or shall I write you a letter to express myself more clearly?"

My face was about the color of a boiled beet. I made funny noises in my throat and felt like a kid who's being kept after school for throwing spit-balls at the teacher. I looked around for a hole to crawl into.

Lion was grinning—quite happily. I kept on staring at the girl because she was wonderful material to stare at. Still, things weren't on the up and up. Something about her appearance?

THERE was enough sex appeal packed into that dress she wore, to take my mind off anything else. It didn't. I knew that she was all tied up inside and ready to bust. Her eyes were devoid of sparkle. She walked stiffly—as though two thirds tight. There was something wooden about her actions and her body.

I wanted to get out of there. I had more than I could handle, in two or three ways. Lester was still hanging around down at the gate, ready to take me apart.

"I get a very clear picture that I'm as welcome as a snow storm in June," I said, and tried to smile. "Sorry I caused all this trouble, both for you and your father. I've been taken in for a sucker, and all I can do is say I'm darned sorry about it—and get out."

I pretended to work up righteous indignation toward my client.

"I'm telling you, Mr. Lion, some people give me a pain in the neck. If I'd been you last night, and you sneaked into my property, I'd have shot to kill. This client of mine is either nuts or making a fool of me—and that isn't hard. You're a good sport for giving me a break I don't deserve. If the cops took me in, I'd sit in the cooler for a long time for trespassing."

He took all of it. He was eating out of my hand. All the time I was keeping an eye on Neva. She wasn't even listening to me.

I said goodbye in a nice humble way and got out of there.

If I had fooled Lion, I didn't even make an impression on Lester. He was waiting for me at the gate.

"Come back again some time, you bum," he said. "It will be a pleasure to scatter you around the scenery."

I didn't even answer him. I had a lot of important things on my mind. I caught a cab at the corner of Hillside Avenue and Foothill Boulevard. There was a coupe following us when we entered the village of West Hills. Lester was driving it. I got a couple of good looks at his ugly pan. Lester didn't like to see me go away without finding out where I was headed for. I didn't blame him much.

"There's a coupe behind us," I told the driver. "That coupe thinks it's smart enough to trail you. I think ten bucks worth that you can leave him in the dust. What do *you* think?"

The driver didn't even look around. I saw his head tip up as he took a look through the rear-view mirror. Then we went away from there. He must have learned to drive by following a rattlesnake track. It was wonderful.

I STOPPED at a drug store in West Hills and called the Intellect.

"Look, my traveling friend," he greeted me, "I'd like to see you once a week or more. I get lonely when you

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

go away and don't pay an occasional visit to the office. We still do business at the same address."

"How's Mrs. Ruth Ford, our rich client?" I asked.

"She's been here this morning," he said. "She's got to have results."

"Then she's talking to the wrong man when she looks at you," I told him. "I got ten bruised and broken fingers, a kiss on the puss from a Great Dane, saw an angel riding in a swan boat and got a slug buried in my hip."

"You're drunk," he snapped. "You get the Hell down . . ."

"Shut up. I saw Miss Neva Lion. She said she was fine, and would I please go away because I bothered her. She's nicer than the picture. Aren't you jealous she didn't insult you personally like she did me?"

The Intellect was raving by now. I'll bet he was chewing on the telephone cord.

"If you don't grab a cab and get down here . . ."

"Again—shut up," I said. "You're going to work for half an hour. It will be a strain. Save your strength. Tell Mrs. Ford that she should stay out of sight until I contact her.

"Call police headquarters and get a line on a big, toothy gorilla named Lester, who is employed by Frank Lion as personal watch-dog. Find out where Lion got all his knowledge of surgery. These answers should prove very interesting and maybe, puzzling. Don't try to figure them out. I can't."

I hung up. I went out of the booth and sat down at a little table near the back of the store. I called the kid over from the fountain.

"You got any coffee?" I asked.

He nodded.

"You take cream and sugar, mister?"

"And spoil the coffee?" I asked.

He went back of the counter and started to pour a cup from a glass coffee maker.

"Don't put it back on the fire," I called to him. "Bring all you got over here."

He came back, a steaming cup in one hand, the coffee-maker in the other. He looked a little worried, but he put the stuff down in front of me. I gave him a buck.

"Keep the change and treat your girl friend," I said.

I stayed with that pot of coffee until there was just a brown stain in the bottom of the glass.

THE Intellect was all flushed and excited when I went in. He had spent a busy half-hour and was ready to retire for the day. For the first time, however, he seemed more interested in what was going on than in his own problems. I told him the whole story, and peeled down to show him where Lion had taken the slug out of my hip.

"Probably it would have been better if he had aimed at your head," was his interesting comment. "This might give you trouble in your old age."

Then his eyes narrowed with thought.

"You think Neva Lion is okay?"

"She says she is," I told him. "Did you find out what I told you to?"

He looked unhappy because I was talking some and telling him very little.

"You didn't give me much information to go on," he complained.

I laughed.

"With the brain you've got, you don't need to know much."

He didn't know if I was insulting him or giving him a pat on the shoulder blades.

"I called Foggerty at headquarters," he said.

Foggerty was a good flat-foot with several promotions behind him. He wore some shining stuff on his uniform,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but he was still just a cop. He was a good Joe.

"Go on," I said.

"Foggerty did some work in the files," he said. "He checked up on the employment agency through which Lion employed this guy, Lester. Lester has a long record. All small theft jobs. He used to work at the Museum when Lion was there. He stole a mummy and they got sore and made him bring it back. I think he could have stolen a lot of stuff that would be more interesting and valuable than a mummy."

"You're not payed to think," I said. "That takes care of Lester. We can have him hauled into the lock-up any time for assault and battery. Maybe we can get him on a murder charge, if he meets me in the dark again."

The Intellect looked disgusted.

"Lion went through medical college some time ago," he said. "I found that out in checking back through the registry. He took four years and left there ready to practice surgery. Never hung out his shingle."

"He's a millionaire," I reminded him. "Lion doesn't have to work."

He had nothing to add to that, so I asked:

"Where's this client of ours, Mrs. Ford, staying?"

He followed me to the door and talked while we went down the hall toward the elevators.

"She arrived from California and went directly to the Arms Rest Hotel. She's stayed there ever since. I called her after I talked to you. She's going to stay put until we contact her."

I RESERVED my own opinions until we reached the small but very swanky lounge of the Arms Rest Hotel. It wasn't a well advertised spot. Not the type of place that you went to unless you had a heavy roll of the green stuff, and heard about the Arms Rest from a friend.

The desk clerk was a small faced, slim figured punk who examined us for bed bugs as he listened to the Intellect make talk. After he had given us the once over, he called Mrs. Ford, and seemed surprised that she thought it would be nice if we came right up.

The Intellect handled all the little details, like giving the floor number to the elevator girl, telling her what a pretty little thing he thought she was, and leading me gently down the hall to room 324.

Ruth Ford had approached middle age, and was trying to stay on the right side of it. She still had a nice figure, not hidden very well under the black lounging pajamas she wore to the door. Her voice was soft, but with an edge on it. She said:

"I'm glad you've come. I'm frightened. Something terrible is happening. I detected it in your voice."

She talked to the Intellect and included me in with an occasional glance.

"This is my partner," the Intellect pointed me out like something he usually kept in the closet and brought out to show his guests. "He has some questions to ask concerning your sister."

We all sat down in a cozy circle around a cocktail table. Ruth Ford poured some drinks and made sure that her pajama neckline was loose enough to give us a sneak preview of coming attractions. We passed around some words on the weather, and I tossed a mild bomb-shell into the witty conversation.

"Too bad you had to leave that fine climate for all this," I said, indicating that I didn't like our own weather too well. "I imagine that even those past weeks of rain on the coast, would have been preferable to our fog."

Her face turned a trifle red, but she

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was fast on the draw.

"California," she said, "offers variety, regardless of the weather."

Nothing to pin on her at this point. I asked her about Neva and the date on which the girl stopped writing letters to her. I killed ten minutes checking up on facts that I didn't need or already had. It gave her a chance to be kittenish, and throw her charm around some more where it could be gazed upon and approved. Nice enough, but I hate coy women. We found ourselves at the door, going out. I said:

"Well, thanks a lot, Mrs. *Lion.*"

I caught her with her rough nerve edges exposed. She was badly flustered.

The Intellect said:

"Mrs. *Ford,*" and then to her, "My partner has a way of mixing his names in a hat and drawing out the wrong one."

I said I was sorry, and we got out. She was shaking a little. It was wonderful, the speed she used in getting that door bolted behind us.

"You're the clumsiest fool in the business," the Intellect stormed when we were once away from the hotel.

WE HAILED a cab and I settled back and closed my eyes. My hip hurt, my fingers were like raw beefsteak and my head ached.

"I didn't make a mistake, calling her Mrs. Lion."

The Intellect sucked in his breath sharply and I could feel him stiffen at my side.

"Okay, Sherlock," he sighed, "suppose you tell me all about this little game of guessing."

I tried to push my headache out of the way by pressing my fingers against my forehead. It didn't work.

"It *is* a guessing game," I admitted. "But here's what I'm guessing. Mrs. Ford and Neva Lion aren't sisters. Mrs. Lion, alias Ford, is Neva's mother."

"And how did you reach this marvelous decision?"

"It's easy," I said. "Compare their ages and their appearance."

"The Ford dame isn't bad," the Intellect sighed.

"That's because in old age, your tastes are dulled. Now listen. I'll talk. Then you tell me what you think. Mrs. Ford rushes to us and wants to learn why her *sister* hasn't written to her for a month or three. She comes all the way from California on that one lead. Does it make sense?"

"It might. Women are funny."

My temper was getting bad.

"It *didn't* happen," I snapped. "It didn't, because Mrs. Lion wasn't in California. She was scared to death when she suspected that I knew her secret. When I called her Mrs. Lion, she went to pieces. It showed through the veneer of sex she was parading around. Now, how did I guess? It's evident. She's registered in a small, exclusive hotel which doesn't even advertise. How would a stranger, fresh from the railroad station, find the Arms Rest Hotel? The answer is, they wouldn't. She's about Frank Lion's age. She has the same general appearance as Neva, but she's old enough to be the girl's mother, and *she is*. Something pretty bad is happening out there at 124 Foothill Boulevard. Something that frightened her out of the house."

"But listen," the Intellect protested. "Why did she come to us? She knew we would find this out. She knew we'd label her a phony."

"Did she? I'm not sure. *You* didn't suspect it. No, I think Mrs. Lion picked out a small, unimportant outfit. We sure fit that classification. She doesn't dare to set the cops on her husband. She doesn't want any part of it. Why should she worry if we find out

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who she is, after she has done the thing she wanted to do all along."

The Intellect looked dazed.

"And just what was she trying to do?"

"Quite simple," I told him, but I didn't think it was simple at all. It was a complicated mess, and I wasn't even sure that I knew much about it—yet. "She knows that all is not sweet and sane in her home. She wants to start trouble and get out herself without hurting her neck or her reputation. She doesn't care who gets killed, as long as it isn't her. She picks out a small agency and sets us on the track. Now, all she has to do is wait for us to uncover trouble and get a good taste of it. Then the cops will step in and clean up everything so that she can have the whole thing settled without involving herself."

WE HAD reached the office. The Intellect paid our cab fare and we raced for the only comfortable chair in the office. He won. His legs are longer. He chewed on a cigar butt which he had hidden in an empty file drawer. He thought for about ten minutes, and then said bitterly:

"Okay, suppose you're right? What do we do now?"

"I'd drop the whole thing if I did what my better sense tells me to."

He moaned about that for a while. I had been paid. I had certain obligations. I like to hear him worry out these things in a pathetic voice. I found a cigarette that had crept through a hole in my coat pocket and folded itself into the lining. It wasn't in bad shape. I lighted it.

"I *might* drop it," I said. "I might make *you* go to work and make an honest living. I didn't say I was going to."

He looked as hopeful as a bird dog on a day old scent.

"I got some pet hates for Lester and Frank Lion," I said. "They're running things about their way, out there in that little private world. I think some day I'll hit Lester with something. Something heavy with rough edges."

I stood up.

He looked happy again. I was afraid he would try to give me a pep talk.

"I'm leaving," I said.

"Where can I get in touch with you?"

The telephone broke into the script at that point, and the Intellect always on the trail of easy money, made a dash for it. He carried on an intelligent conversation for some time. He used one word. It was, "No," used over and over in various octaves.

When he hung up, he had a hurt, bewildered look on his face. I didn't have to guess. Someone had yanked a bank account out from under his eyes.

"She's dead," he said. It didn't tell me much.

"Sure, she is," I said. "She deserved it. She's *been* dead for years, from the neck down. Who is she?"

"Mrs. Ford—I mean—Mrs. Lion. Oh, what the hell. Everything is turned upside down. She was strangled right after we left. The manager called her about a new lamp. He tried to get her five times. The desk clerk hadn't seen her go out. They went up."

He gulped.

"Foggerty's over there now. The desk clerk said we were up to see her this afternoon. He knew who I was. Foggerty says get the hell over there right away."

The whole thing didn't shock me much. The dame had been playing with the atom. It busted over her head. I don't like murder very well, but I no longer scream at the mention of the word. I said:

"You see, Foggerty. I got other

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

troubles."

He grabbed his hat and tried to push me out the door.

"You're in this as deep as I am," he said.

I played coy.

"Not me, boss. I got a date with a little blonde out at West Hills. It's urgent. If the murders are started, that little chicken might be next in line."

We parted, not exactly on the best of terms. I'll bet he cussed me all the way to the hotel. I wouldn't know. I acquired another pair of brass knuckles, an automatic and some ideas.

The ideas weren't so clever. Mine aren't.

I WALKED right across the street as though I belonged there. I started ringing the bell on the spike-topped gate. I had it all figured out. If I couldn't sneak into the house, I'd go in the front door.

I waited until Lester came tripping lightly down the drive from the gate-house. Then I put my thumb on the bell again and left it there. It was a loud bell. It got on his nerves. He came toward me with a haze of sulphur smoke around his head. He knew a lot of naughty words.

"You little dried up, pot-bellied——"

"Whoa," I said, flashing my nicest smile. "Lester, sometimes I don't think you like me."

He stood on the other side of the gate and the Great Dane galloped down the drive and took his place at Lester's side. The pooch growled. It sounded like he meant it. He was a great bluffer.

Lester uttered a few more remarks on the condition my neck would be in if I didn't leave that spot.

"I'll set the dog on you," he shouted.

That sounded like a great idea. It might work.

"I dare you to," I said.

It had developed into one of those arguments kids get into over their pet bag of marbles. Lester unlocked the gate and the pooch came pouncing toward me. I held out my arms as if I was greeting my best friend's wife.

"Hello, you big horse," I said.

The pooch growled and put his front paws on my shoulders. I braced myself and submitted to some wet kisses. I didn't like them, but I *did* like the way Lester's eyes popped out at the little scene. He started yelling at the dog, trying to bully it back behind the gate.

"Don't bother," I said. "We'll both come in. He likes me. He won't be any trouble. I got to see Mr. Lion anyhow."

It almost worked. I got in all right, and fast. About that time, Lester gathered his wits together and rushed me.

I was as ready as I'll ever be to meet a tank coming at full speed with the gun turret working. I double up my right hand under the glove, felt that nice pair of knuckles underneath, and let it fly from way down.

I put everything I had into it. It was a nice effort. Lester stopped coming, rocked back and forth a couple of times and grabbed his jaw. My fist felt as though it had just gone through a brick wall. Lester's eyes opened wider and wider and he just stood there. I tried again, straight arm, right into that spot below the ribs. It was low and dirty. Lester grunted and sat down. Then he rolled over, doubled his legs up against his stomach and howled. I didn't pity him a damned bit. I walked past him and on up toward the house. It would be an hour or so before he got his stomach lining straightened out so he could fight again.

I GOT twenty yards before I saw Lion running toward me. I jumped into the evergreen grove that grew close to the road. He hadn't seen me. He

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ran toward the gate without stopping.

Opportunity evidently was waiting—at least for a while. I ran in the opposite direction. My footsteps were damned far apart. I was in a hurry. I didn't ring the bell. I went into the hall at the front of the house and stopped because there was something there I hadn't seen before, and I was very much interested.

Both sides of the hall were lined with mummy cases. I never could warm up much toward mummies. They've been dead too long to be very attractive. These fancy boxes in the hall had a lot of ugly faces painted on them. They gave me the willies. There was one, though, that looked interesting. It was open, and it was empty. There was a mummy loose in the house.

I wondered if anyone else was around. I wasn't worried about meeting the mummy. I was wondering a lot about it. I listened intently, but could hear no sound. I walked the length of the hall that divided the house in two parts. An open door invited me to take a peek. I did, and went down the broad staircase into a brilliantly lighted room below. It was square, decorated with white, very clean enamel, and there was a table in the center under a bright spotlight.

Frank Lion had been plenty worried when he left the house. I suppose he had heard the bell and wondered if Lester had things under control. He left the doors open behind him, and it made a pretty broad trail for me to follow. So I had followed it. I was here—but what now? I moved across the room, giving an imitation of a man who's scared and wants to run away. I lifted the sheet, took a quick look, and found out where that damned mummy had gone.

I kept on staring at the thing under the sheet, but my eye sockets were begging my eyes to come back in where they belonged. The mummy was a hideous collection of bones, held together by brown, parchment-like skin. You could count every bone and joint. You could look at the wrinkled mouth, grinning and open, to reveal brown teeth. Hair, like black horse hair, was matted and twisted around the neck and shoulders.

I covered the thing up and waited for my blood pressure to go down to normal. A corpse isn't bad when it's fresh. I didn't like this Egyptian importation. It had been dead long enough to take on a personality all its own, and I didn't like it.

Then Frank Lion's footsteps sounded in the hall upstairs. It was a guess, of course, but I figured he was on his way down here. I had about thirty seconds to find a place to hide. I could fight, but if I did, I wouldn't learn anything more about the mummy, and other details I had come to clear up.

The sheet was large. It hung to the floor on one side of the table. I went to my knees and grunted my way under it. Sort of a lower birth, with a babe without much sex-appeal occupying the upper. I waited.

The footsteps came down the stairs and assumed the form of patent leather shoes and neatly creased trousers. The patent leather shoes went briskly across the room and I heard the click of a house phone being taken from the hook. Lion's voice said:

"Lester?"

Evidently it was. Lion sounded angry, and very impatient.

"He's not down here. Search the grounds. Find him this time and put him away. I should have done it when I had the chance."

I guess Lester thought he needed help, because Lion listened a minute and swore at the phone softly.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Never mind. It's your job and you can catch him or get out. If you wish to go on living in a world without iron barred windows, find him."

He hung up.

FOR a couple of long minutes he moved from place to place in the room, and although I could see only the feet and the lower part of the trousers, I knew that he was preparing for some work at the table. Then he went to the stairs and touched a light switch. The room blacked out. I felt prickly heat traveling up and down my neck. A soft, glowing light came from above the table. I could see little slices of it reflecting on the floor. It must have been some sort of a heating lamp.

Then Frank Lion's footsteps traveled up the stairs and I heard the door at the top slam. A bolt rasped into place. I climbed out from under the table and looked around. Little Miss Egypt, of what year I don't know, was fairly glowing in the heat light treatment. I wondered how long it would be before her B.O. would get into action.

So far I had some additional information and didn't know what to do with it. I gum-shoed up the steps. The door was locked from the outside. I went back down and moved around the room like a small squirrel in a big cage. There was one more door. I slipped the bolt and opened it. It was the door that led up a flight of steps to the rear of the house.

If I went out that way, I'd be seen. After that, it was just a matter of time before I got tossed out again, or worse. No, I'd stick around a little while yet. This was always an avenue for escape if it became necessary.

Footsteps in the hall above again. It was beginning to become a habit, and my nerves rubbed on each other until they produced a short circuit. The whole mess was getting too hot, and I wasn't getting anything but added trouble. I ran up the steps as quietly as possible and tried to press myself into the wall behind the door. The bolt rasped and Lester came into sight, a hulking shadow above me.

"Mr. Lion," he bellowed, and pushed the door open. I was behind it. He rushed past me, thundering down the steps. Evidently he didn't like the mummy, relaxed under the glow of the heat lamp. He came back up again.

He never did find out what hit him. I let him have about six inches of lead pipe over the head. He tipped backward and thumped all the way to the cellar. The sound was soft music to my ears.

Just to make sure he wouldn't get another opportunity to go snooping around and get himself hurt, I wrapped him up neatly with some rope that lay in a corner with a lot of packing cases. I pushed him up on the table where he could get the benefit of the heat lamp, turned him gently so that he would awaken with his eyes staring at the comfortably warm mummy, and covered them both with the sheet. Lester was in for some more bad moments, when he awakened.

I bolted the basement door behind me and rubbed paint off the wall, all the way along the hall, to make myself a small target. My ears kept me posted on who wasn't around and I made a tour of the down-stairs rooms. There were a lot of them, but Neva Lion didn't materialize.

I tried the second floor, stopping occasionally to look out toward the front of the house. I don't know where Frank Lion went. He still had me worried.

There was a third floor. I found Neva in a small bedroom, stretched out on the silk spread with nothing on but some smooth, very white flesh. She

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was, according to my understanding of such things, deader than a smoked herring.

THIS girl was even more lovely than I had thought. I would no more have touched that delicate face than I would have tried to paint over a masterpiece. She was lying on her back, her honey-colored hair acting as cushion to the small, well formed head. Every line was softened and made more beautiful by the blue silk stretched beneath her.

I stood there cussing Frank Lion for doing this to an Angel. I was so interested in cussing Lion that I stopped worrying about him until he pushed a rifle barrel into my back.

"I wouldn't turn around if I were you," he said in a soothing voice. "This time I'm not going to worry about where I hit you."

He didn't have anything to lose now. He knew what I knew, and that was too much. He couldn't let me go again. I'd come back—with a lot of little helpers.

"Go ahead," I said. "Don't let me suffer."

He chuckled. I never did like his kind of humor. It wasn't healthy.

"You still have courage," he said. "I suppose you've seen a lot of things you don't understand. You worked just a little too fast for us."

I kept my mouth shut. I concentrated my eyes on the body of the girl. It kept me from being frightened. I was still so sore I didn't have time to sob about my own tough luck.

"Satisfy your curiosity?" he asked.

The rifle was rubbing the skin off my back. "Suppose you take that cannon away from my back. I can't think straight."

He stepped back a few paces. I pivoted, slowly.

"Thanks," I said. "You can still hit me at ten paces, if the mood takes you."

He nodded, his eyes bright, not speaking. I sat down on the edge of the bed. My hand touched the girl's arm. It startled me. The flesh was warm. Then, she couldn't be dead. I think he noticed the change in my face.

"You're really not too bright, are you?" he asked.

Lion was the sort of guy who would do a lot of talking if I could get him started. I knew the type. He had done something that he was very pleased about and he wanted to share his secret. I talked because I didn't want him to lose interest and pull that trigger.

"You know, Lion, your wife is smart."

He wet his lips with his tongue. The rifle wavered a little.

"Where does she figure into this?"

"You've been wanting to know where I came from," I said. "Well, there's no secret now, because your wife is out of the way. She hired me to throw a match into this mess and watch it explode."

HIS face betrayed color. His eyes, no longer bright, were narrowed.

"With her out of the way," I said, "I don't care if you guess the rest of the story. She was putting up the cash and when that stops coming, I stop working."

"You're damned right you do," he said. "You stuck your neck out four miles and it's too late to pull it in again."

I chuckled. I tried to make it sound full of humor and good-will.

"I am the son of a long line of turtles," I told him. "Let me explain. Ordinarily, this would be a tough spot to be in. Me, I'm a hard shelled turtle, and I can get my neck into that shell

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pretty fast. For instance, I know that you found out where your wife was hiding out. You put her out of commission a few hours ago. Now then, if I pointed you out as a strangler, you wouldn't have a chance to drill me. You'd be busy saving *your* neck."

He didn't deny it. He didn't tell me anything. He just started moving toward me with that rifle ahead of him. He was going to murder again-any time now, and it was a pretty personal problem with me. I talked big to get him excited, and I guess he was.

"You came back once too often," he said. He hardly spoke above a whisper.

"Sure, big shot," I teased him. "Shoot me right up close, so there'll be a big hole. You're having fun with those dried up hunks of humanity in the basement. They can't fight back. Your daughter couldn't fight back either. You kept her doped to the ears."

WHAM. . . .

Just before he pressed the trigger, I took a dive. I had been trying to time it. I wasn't quite right. The slug tore a red hot hole in my right shoulder. I rolled over and over and found myself under the bed. Lion had lost his calm now. He didn't know just what to do, and while he was trying to figure out where I was going to show up next, I came to my feet on the far side of the bed. The rifle was slow merchandise to use in the small room. I took a short run, put both feet ahead of me through the window and landed amid splintering glass on the porch roof ten feet below. It broke my fall. Half dead and unable to hold on, I rolled across the roof, grabbed for the edge and got a finger hold. I saw him at the window. I dropped to the ground and started to run.

He fired again, and the bullet buried itself in the turf at my side. I held in the blood that was spurting from my shoulder. The arm didn't hurt any more.

I zig-zagged across the lawn toward the garden. Ahead of me was the pool where the swan boat was tied. I had a chance to get out, if I played it right. I kept on going until I was about ten feet from the pool. Looking around, I saw that Lion, still in the window, had the rifle lifted to his shoulder. I heard the slug sing past me and dropped on my belly. I lay still, trying to make it look good. Then I started to crawl, dragging one leg behind me. I guess he figured I was winged. I wanted it that way. When I looked again, he wasn't there. It would take a minute for him to rush down-stairs and come out by the rear door.

I took a swift sprint and went into the pool head first. I forgot to close my mouth and took a gallon of water into my system. By the time I had come up to exchange the water for air, Lion was out on the lawn. As quietly as possible I sank to the bottom of the pool. I found a handful of weeds, and held on to them. The water was cool and very clear. Some distance away, the hull of the boat was visible in the shimmering surface of the pool. It was pretty close to evening. I had to wait for dark. I swam under-water and came up on the far side of the boat. I held on to the side of the boat and took a big mouthful of clear air.

LION was on the other side of the pool, and I don't think he was very happy. His language didn't sound that way. He spent ten minutes wandering around among the trees, and had to give up. He went back to the house. I crawled out of the pool and managed to make the trip down to my special

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

entrance over the wall. I took it by degrees. Once I was over, I felt better. Down at West Hills Village I found a doctor and had my shoulder cleaned up and bandaged. I lied to him. I said I had been cleaning a gun and it had turned on me and let me have it. Guns are very nasty like that, I said.

He eyed me carefully and pretended that everything would be all right. Could he have my name? Usual report to the police. I gave him my name and my address.

"124 Foothill Boulevard," I said. "I'm staying with Mr. Frank Lion."

I'll bet he was on the telephone three minutes after I left. That was what I wanted. Foggerty would be here looking for me, and the Intellect would not be far behind. I might need them.

By the time I got back, it was dark. Climbing that wall was a cinch for me now, even with a game arm. I felt more natural going in this way than I would have through the gate. Safer—also.

The room below the house was empty. The door was open that led down to it. I had left it locked. Both Lester and his mummy were gone. So was the table. I ducked out into the night again and circled so that I could look up toward Neva's room. There was a light in the room. Whatever Lion was up to, he was in a hurry. As long as I was circulating, he *had* to move fast.

I'm not built for Superman stuff. I managed to huff and puff my way up the column of the porch to the roof. I was still ten feet below the window. I couldn't stretch myself that far. The bricks were rough, with one or two turned end-wise and set in for scenic effect. That's a very poor ladder for a fat man, but I tried it. I made it. I was under the window with two jutting bricks and ten feet of oxygen under me. It wasn't comforting.

Lester was in there, and Frank Lion, and a lot of stuff I've never seen before. I was glad I'd come for the show. Neva's body still lay on the bed, not a muscle, not a finger, moved from the original position.

The mummy was there, on the table, her sheet missing. She didn't seem to mind. At the foot of the bed there was a big cabinet with dials and tubes and wires dangling all over it. It was something out of a nightmare, in the Superman vein. Lester was imitating a big, dumb ape with his mouth hanging open. That was an easy part for Lester. Lion busied himself by carrying hands full of copper wire and attaching them to various spots on his daughter's body. For each wire leading to Neva, there was another clipped to the mummy.

Lion seemed well satisfied with the arrangements, for he worked swiftly and well. Perspiration stood out on his face. His hands, very white under the light, were shaking.

He stepped to the light switch and turned out the single bulb that illuminated the room. Then the tubes on the machine started to flicker, became powerful and the cabinet hummed like a queen bee. Then I held on and watched it happen.

Neva Lion seemed suddenly to change. Her white, delicate flesh turned dark, then brown. It shrivelled and her flesh seemed to fall away beneath it.

I held down a yell of terror. I kept looking, forgetting that my face in the window might be seen anytime. No danger. Lester and his boss weren't looking for anyone in my direction.

THE girl was changing before my eyes, into a bony, mummified corpse. Then I knew what Lion was doing. He was destroying his daughter and producing a sort of cross current

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that gave *her* qualities to the mummy on the table.

Flesh filled out under the cracked, dried skin of the thing on the table. The skin itself changed color and glowed with life. The face took shape.

Lion had discovered the deadly secret of exchanging one life for another. I knew that this thing had taken place once before. The mummy, now a well formed, sleeping girl with long black hair, was the same creature I had seen floating about in the boat on the surface of the lagoon.

I wanted to do something. I wasn't in a position to do anything but hold on. In three minutes, and they seemed like centuries, the thing was over. Lion was turning off the machine and wrapping the girl in a soft blanket. Lester covered the thing on the bed. They left the room and I started backing downward as fast as I could. I did all right until I was six feet from the porch roof. Then I took the fastest way.

I lay still on the roof-top and watched them carry the girl to the garden. Lion's voice came up to me clearly.

"Watch the gate. We'll be out of here in an hour. The shock would be too great to her if we left at once."

Lester growled something I didn't understand and went back toward the front of the house. So this was the payoff. After Lion was out of sight in the darkness, I crawled down the post and followed him.

In the shelter of the trees, I watched him place the girl on the bench near the water and pull the swan boat toward him on a long rope. He gathered her into his arms and placed her in the boat. Her arms sought his neck and drew him down close. Their lips met. The girl was like a hypnotized thing. She moved slowly, without energy, without interest in anything but him.

"You have awakened again, Princess," Lion said. "We will go soon, to strange places in this world."

He was a pretty convincing wolf as wolves go.

"I am glad," the girl said.

"I made you sleep again," he said. "Now you will remain awake and will not suffer. Do you like your lagoon and your swans?"

She nodded and the long, ebony hair moved in the breeze.

"I brought you to your lagoon so that you would not be frightened. Will you leave with me, and not be frightened when you see strange things? Will you trust me?"

"I am safe with you," she said. "And very happy."

I looked away from this tender scene and thought of the ugly corpse on the bed in Neva's room. I fought down all the emotions I felt toward the dream stuff in Lion's arms. Who was she? Nothing but a mummy, I told myself. A damned, dried up mummy who had no reason to live again.

When I had worked my temper past the luke warm point and it was boiling, I stood up and went toward Lion. I pushed my automatic ahead of me. They looked pretty silly when they saw me. The girl didn't mind. She was out cold as far as thinking was concerned. Not Lion. He knew I wasn't playing games this time.

"I'm not talking very much," I said. "I'm not wasting any lead."

He managed to drop her and get to his knees. The girl threw her arms around him and he tore himself loose. She started to sob.

I said, "You got fifteen seconds to start talking."

I SOUNDED pretty frightening. My voice slipped way down into the bass key and I imitated a tough guy who is having fun being that way. I

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

guess I was.

He talked.

"You've got to let us go," he said. "There's nothing in this for you. I've got money. I'll pay you well. Give me an hour. I can pay."

"You're repeating yourself," I said. "Stand up."

He slipped and fell flat on his back. He got to his feet. He was a changed man. I guess the strain had been pretty heavy on him. He really liked that kid in the boat and he had worked hard to keep her.

"I don't like men who murder their wives and their daughters," I said. "They stink—in any language."

Lion got some control over his voice.

"I had to kill my wife," he said. "She wouldn't shut up. I offered her money and a divorce. She would have gone on talking."

"You strangled her," I said.

He took a step in my direction.

"Don't you—can't you understand what this means to me?"

"Sure," I said. "I understand that there's a girl upstairs who gave up her life for this."

He started to plead his case, and he would have made a clever shyster lawyer.

"You haven't anything to gain by this," he said. "I worked for years to perfect the thing I have done. I wasn't a criminal. I found that I could bring life back to people of the past. I didn't mean any harm."

His voice became cool and technical. He was so wrapped up in his own greatness that he forgot to be frightened.

"I can steal the blood, the soul, even the atom structure from one person's body and transfer them to another. I doped the person from whom I stole. I gave them back their life when I had completed the work."

He looked tenderly at the girl.

"I was learning history from the very lips of the past. Then I created this—this girl. She was lovely. She stole my heart. I couldn't bear to send her back to the tomb."

He paused and made a futile little gesture with his hands.

"I fell in love."

"Nice sentiment," I said.

He sent a flood of words at me. He recited a well learned lesson.

"I wanted the Princess. My wife thought I was mad. She saw the girl in my arms. She learned what I had done. I told her she was crazy. I went on and built the lagoon down here. I put the swan boat and the swans on the lagoon. All this cushioned my Princess from the shock of entering this world. My wife left, but I could not let Neva leave. Then you came, and I had to revive Neva so that you could talk to her.

"Tonight I have brought my Princess back to the lagoon for the last time. If you help us, we will both be gone from here in a few minutes. Think, man! I can make you rich! You will speak to no one. No one will ever know."

"It sounds profitable for me," I admitted.

"It will be," he said eagerly. "I'll write a check. You name the amount."

"It sounds profitable," I repeated. "It also sounds like the kind of a deal a skunk like you would dope out."

He was coming after me. There was an insane streak in the man. He had the spirit of an animal, fighting for its mate.

"You spoiled everything," he said coldly. "Why didn't I kill you when I had the chance?"

He moved like lightning. The girl cried out as he hit me in the belly! It knocked the wind out of me, but I brought the barrel of the gun down on his head and saw red. It was his blood.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He fell back and hit the trunk of a pine tree.

He grunted and didn't move again.

I DON'T know how I went through with it. I never really use my head for anything but taking the brunt of any attack. I must have been thinking without realizing it. I took the girl by the hand and dragged her toward the house. She didn't have any fight in her. She was like a sleep-walker. I guess I'm human. I wondered for a while, when I was close to her, if it wasn't a good idea for *me* to skip the country—and take my little mummy with me. Then I got back on the right track and didn't dare to look at her again. She had a lot of figure that would have made me happy, if I could have forgotten Neva.

I locked her in the room with Neva. I didn't worry about her much. She slumped down on the bed and sat there. I got Lion and dragged him up to the house. His feet beat a tattoo on the stairs and I grunted and strained until we reached the room on the third floor.

I dumped Lion in the corner of the room. He was still out cold. I picked up the girl and put her on the table. She couldn't think for herself. She didn't have an ounce of fight in her.

"Don't worry, chicken, this isn't going to hurt—much."

I had been day-dreaming for a long time. I didn't think of Lester again until he came into the room like the Twentieth Century on a record run. It wasn't time now to employ idle conversation. I saw him coming, that meatball face of his all lighted up with a slaughter-house look. I pivoted and drew at the same time. I pumped lead into him until he stopped coming and went down on his knees.

Even then he wasn't afraid. He tried to speak twice, and finally got the right words out.

"Don't—shoot—any more," he said, and slumped down on the floor. I didn't. It wasn't necessary.

When I got through with Lester, Frank Lion was on his feet again. He was so groggy he didn't know what it was all about. He was game, though, and desperate. He staggered toward me.

"Stay away," I said. "It's my party now."

He didn't hear me. His eyes were glazed over. He was breathing hard. He grabbed a handful of tubes and was going to break up the machine. I let him have it. I emptied the automatic into his guts. He didn't have time to ruin the cabinet. He let go of the tubes, grabbed himself with both hands and went to the floor. Saliva was drooling from his mouth. Then the saliva was red. He wasn't going to get up.

I DON'T know how I did it. I go to church only on Easter Sunday. I don't ask God for a lot of things that I'm better off without in the first place.

I guess I have a photographic mind. I had watched it all happen once. I figured I had to try.

I locked the door. I'm glad I did. Before I had turned my back, I heard footsteps pounding up toward me. The Intellect was shouting my name.

"Okay," I said. "I'm in here. The door's locked. Don't break it down."

"Are you crazy?"

"I don't think so," I said. "You go down stairs and wait there. I got something to do. I'll come down when I'm ready."

The Intellect sounded hurt.

"I don't get it," he said.

I sighed. I was busy tying the girl down to the table. The copper wire came in handy. She didn't protest. Her eyes never left Lion's corpse.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You'll get it, all right," I called to the Intellect. "You wait a while, and you get more than you asked for."

He was arguing with someone outside the door. After a minute, they all went away.

I tried to figure out all the wires. Evidently Lion had had trouble on the same thing. They were labelled, on the face of the cabinet. *"Right foot"—"left hand"—"negative"—"positive."*

I guessed that the Princess ought to be negative, and hoped I was right. Neva was positive. I got all the wires in place.

I've never prayed. I looked up toward the ceiling, because that was supposed to be the right direction to look in at a time like this. I didn't see the ceiling. I saw the clear, star filled sky beyond it. I don't know what else I saw, but I said:

"It isn't for me. It's for Neva. She's a pretty good kid. She deserves some help."

I pressed the switch that lighted the tubes.

I think if I had had another slug in my gun, I would have used it on myself in those next few moments. Nothing happened. I gave up. I looked at the poor, dead thing on the bed and there was sweat standing out in beads on my face. Then my eyes started to sting, and I wiped them with my coat sleeve. That wasn't sweat.

Slowly, the change started to take place. I leaned closer, not daring to trust my eyes. There was movement below the skin. There was color, coming slowly back to the skin itself.

Gradually, the change became complete. I have never witnessed a miracle before. I wouldn't know how to tell it, so a person could understand. Maybe Lion could, but not any longer for he was dead.

I WENT down the stairs carrying Neva in my arms. I left the door open upstairs because no one was going to get away—not now. I had wrapped Neva in a soft blanket, and I carried her proudly, holding her close to me. She was my baby now, and I had given back her life to her.

She wasn't awake. The drug would hold her in its spell for a long time. Her body was normal, though. So normal that it made my heart beat like a trip-hammer.

The Intellect met me at the bottom of the steps. Foggerty and a half dozen cops were there. They started asking questions. I didn't let go of Neva. I didn't feel the wound in my shoulder. I felt swell.

"You'll find two dead men and a mummy upstairs," I said to Foggerty. "When Frank Lion died, he had confessed to murdering his wife. He tried to kill his daughter. She'll tell you that when she's normal and well again. The other corpse is an ex-con. You won't have to jail him. You can bury him instead."

"You said there was a mummy," Foggerty said, and I didn't blame him for looking at me as though I'd better go to the hospital myself.

"Just misplaced," I said. "Put her back in her coffin in the front hall. She won't hurt you."

We all stood there wondering what to do next. I said:

"How about an ambulance and a police escort. This girl needs a doctor."

Foggerty came out of his trance and jumped for a phone. I eased myself into a chair and cuddled Eva's head on my shoulder. Her clean, blond hair tickled my nose. It smelled wonderful. In her sleep, she snuggled closer. They all went upstairs. When they came down, they tried to pump me.

"I'm not talking yet," I said. "I've

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

got business first. When Neva feels better, I'll try to tell you some things I don't know much about myself."

Foggerty was a good cop, and a good guy.

"Sure," he said. "Sure, you better rest up. You've been shooting to beat hell, and you collected a little lead yourself. I think everything is going to turn out okay."

I heard the police siren in a distance. I stood up and Foggerty made a path to the door for me.

In the ambulance, I started to feel a lot better.

THE END

## THE MAN WHO MAPPED THE BRAIN

★ By GARY LEE HORTON ★

BECAUSE an Austrian school-boy was concerned with why people with large eyes (his own were quite small) always had good memories, the amazing science of phrenology was born. The schoolboy, Franz Gall, did not dream of the drama of his work, as he puttered about his skulls and facial casts in his laboratory at Vienna in the 1790's. All he was seeking to do was to discover the answers to those riddles which had puzzled him as a youngster. Was there any connection between a person's face and his personality and character traits? Why did some people have good memories, while others, like himself, could not remember anything for more than a few minutes? Soon, he was convinced that everyone's personality could be read by the bumps on his brain.

As a medical student, Gall worked night after night among the unwanted brains and skulls in the post-mortem room of the old Vienna Krankenhaus. The world was his laboratory. On the streets, at Court, in schools and prisons he measured every one's skull with his eyes or with instruments if he was allowed. The city prison became his haunt. He thought that among these hardened criminals he would surely discover some criminal bumps sticking out prominently. He examined the heads of countless pickpockets and found them all to have one part of the skull enlarged. Gall named this "bump" the knob of acquisitiveness.

One day he encountered a haughty beggar who had squandered a fortune and was now too proud to work. Gall examined the head of this man, and found a bump just behind the crown on each side which he called the "bump" of pride. In an effort to confirm the diagnosis, Gall hastened to the insane asylum of which he was visiting physician and asked to be shown to an inmate who was considered the most proud patient in the asylum. He was taken to a patient who claimed she was the Queen of France. Gall was disappointed to find upon investigation that she did not have the bumps of the haughty beggar. However, that did not disturb him for long. Thinking fast, he decided that among the insane, pride was really vanity, so that the "queen of France" would not be expected to have the same brain picture as the pickpocket.

As the years passed, Gall's pseudo-science became more and more popular. All over the world, people were feeling the bumps on their heads to discover their personalities. The most famous writers of the day, George Eliot, in England, and Walt Whitman, in America, were amateur phrenologists. At one time, Gall had a collection of three hundred skulls of famous writers, statesmen, artists, and soldiers, whose personality and character traits were mapped out on their brain according to his chart.

But the new science did not go unchallenged. As the list of converts grew, the ranks of scoffers also mounted. At first, the Austrian emperor was proud to have the discoverer of the newest science in his realm, and he invited Gall to come to the palace as his personal physician. Gall, fearing that his duties might take him away from his first love, recommended a friend in his stead. The friend was jealous of Gall's success and convinced the emperor that Gall's work, brain researches constituted blasphemies against the church and God, and in 1805, Gall was forced to leave Austria by royal edict.

Gall's exile took him to Berlin, and then on to Paris, where he died in obscurity in Paris in 1828. His students, following his directions examined his brain and skull. They found his skull to be most prominent in Love, Friendship, and Paternal Affection, but with Combativeness and Destructiveness also well developed.

Not all of Gall's theories were the romantic workings of his fertile mind. Modern scientists have used Gall's original chart of the brain to study brain diseases and other neurological topics.

The amazing science that shook the sentiments of the masses of the great continental powers and the United States is dead. Yet its influence continues to be felt. Time and again faint mutterings of it reappear, as in the works of the eminent psychologist William James, who, though he criticized phrenology as a whole, couldn't help adding that "a hook nose and a firm jaw are signs of practical energy."

* * *

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

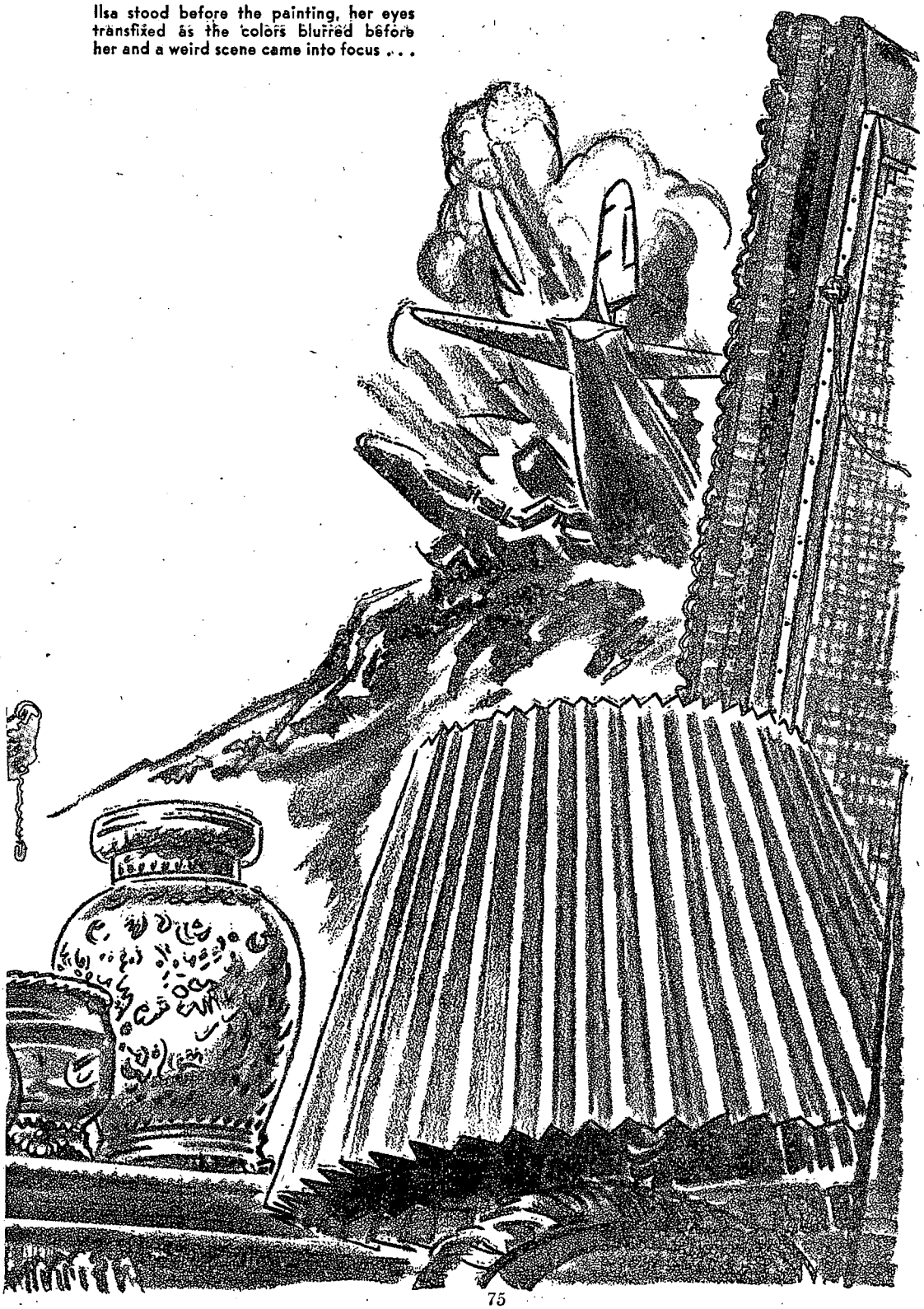
# Painting of the Prophet

## by David Wright O'Brien

**He was strange, this seller of antiques.
But even stranger was the painting he loved.
For on its surface all things were foretold.**

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ilsa stood before the painting, her eyes transfixed as the colors blurred before her and a weird scene came into focus . . .





PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IT WAS a dismally dreary little town, and Ilsa was heartily sick of it. She was weary, too, with the dusty, cheap little room which she and John shared at the "best" of the town's half dozen more habitable hotels.

And she was thoroughly fed up with this business of being an Army wife. Which undoubtedly was the major cause for her short-tempered, sullen state of mind as she and John were taking their regular stroll that evening after dinner.

John had been whistling the chorus of the song she sang that night of their first meeting. This was a habit of his which had of late become increasingly irritating.

"I wish you'd stop that," she exclaimed suddenly.

He stopped instantly. His gait slowed, and his handsome, sun-bronzed features registered surprise and hurt.

"What's wrong, Ilsa, darling?" he demanded.

She stopped then, and turned to face him. He was tall and wide shouldered. The splash of colored ribbons on his chest, the clean fit of his uniform, the sergeant's stripes on his sleeves, all struck the same chords that they had when she'd first met him. But now it was different. Now she knew better. She was unimpressed.

"I don't like it, that's what's wrong!" Ilsa snapped.

He put his strong hands on her shoulders, gently. The hurt left his eyes, his white smile was kind, understanding, reassuring.

"Don't let your nerves get you, baby," he said huskily. "You've got to brace up. Lots of wives go through the same thing every moment of the day. It isn't easy to think of it. The doubt, the fear, the uncertainty. I understand all that. But I'll get through. I came back once, and I'll come back again. The first time I didn't have anything to come back for. I hadn't met you then. But this time, with so much more reason to return, there isn't a Jap this side of hell who can keep me from returning."

She wanted to laugh at this. Near hysteria gripped her. She wanted to laugh in his face. To tell the crazy fool shrilly, definitely, that— quite as usual— he had no idea of what she was thinking. He was thinking that her worries over his imminent departure for the combat zones had left her nerves taut, her disposition upset. He was thinking that she was distraught with the knowledge that the time they had left together was a mere matter of hours.

This was funny. This was screamingly hilarious. The fool! She wanted to beat her fists against his big, be-ribboned chest and howl the truth at him. She wanted to tell him that she loathed him, despised him, regretted the day she'd met him and the glamorous illusions that had so blinded her that she'd married him. . .

SHE had been singing at an Air Base on the coast. Ilsa Perry, beautiful Hollywood screen songstress. Ilsa Perry, entertaining the boys in uniform as a necessary part of her publicity agents' campaign to make her the darling of the services.

They had picked a soldier from the camp audience that night to have a "date" with the glamorous Ilsa Perry after the show. Sgt. John Carrin had been the lucky G.I. selected as her date.

Sgt. Carrin had a chest full of ribbons. He was just back from overseas —a hero. He was tall, good-looking, extremely photogenic in the magazine publicity pictures released on that "date" a few weeks later.

Bert Talbot, Ilsa's number one pub-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

licity man, had first suggested the idea of her "chasing" the handsome soldier. Their romance would make good copy—would give Ilsa's pictures access to every newspaper in the country. It was an excellent idea.

It had gotten a little out of Ilsa's control after a few weeks, however. And a champagne party, followed by a trip to Las Vegas, resulted in a tremendous publicity presentation on the front pages of all newspapers the following morning.

"Hollywood Star Weds War Hero," the papers proclaimed.

Ilsa's press agents rubbed their hands. Her studio announced that box office returns on her current picture jumped a hundred per cent. Ilsa, now owning a handsome husband, didn't mind. She rather liked it at first. But the public attention couldn't hold forever.

And the handsome soldier—she learned to her horror—began to take it all much too seriously.

She remembered that talk he'd had with her the first week. He had wanted her to quit pictures, to give up a career that was just beginning to prosper.

"When this damned war is over, darling," he'd told her. "We're going to settle down. We'll be the plain people living in a plain little house in Kansas, and I'll be the guy who owns the garage down the street. We ought to begin adjusting ourselves to that now."

Ilsa had laughed in his face, that night.

John had walked out on her, and she had felt a blessed sense of relief. Plain people, indeed. Kansas—my God! She was Ilsa Perry, beautiful, gay, glamorous. And the fool thought that his silly illusions—it was ridiculous.

But a gossip columnist had printed a hint of their ruptured marital state the following day. Ilsa's press agents, Ilsa's studio's big shots, had all telephoned to her frantically.

They were firm, logical, adamant.

"A divorce from a hero would ruin you. Even the hint of trouble with him is bad box office, Ilsa," Bert Talbot had said, among others. "Go back to him, get him back. Do whatever you can to keep up the illusion. Hell, he'll be going overseas again soon. Then you can have a strictly legitimate vacation from the guy, if that's how you feel. But we can't afford any bad publicity on your marriage. He's a war hero, see? You just can't afford that."

The studio executives had even hinted that they might tear up Ilsa's contract, if such "bad publicity" ever broke.

And she had been forced to bring him back, to make him think that she was sorry, that her feelings on the matter of quitting her career had changed, that their life together was going to be an incredible pattern of that he wanted.

She had told him that she'd quit pictures. Just as soon as her present contract expired, of course. She had—after much violent protest—agreed to his demand that they live on what he was earning, stay only at places that his meager savings could afford, eat only food which he could pay for. His handsome, stupid pride had to be satisfied. She couldn't afford to break with him. Not after the edict her studio and press agents had laid down on the matter.

The studio gave her a month's leave, so that she could be with him in the dirty little town outside his Air Base for the five weeks before he went back overseas.

And when the photographers from *Picture Magazine* had come to their hotel room to get a series of photo-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

graphs on the simple, honest, American-army-wife life Ilsa Perry was leading; Sgt. John Carrin, her husband, had refused to permit them to exploit their privacy.

Ilsa had been furious at this. *Picture Magazine* was a national institution. The publicity would have been tremendous. It was worth a freight train of gold to her career. But when she had called Hollywood wildly in her rage, her studio bosses and the press agent boys had avised her to give in to his wishes, to skip the pictures, to avoid any break in their publicly labeled "bliss."

"Hell, kid, the guy'll be going back over in another week or so," she was reminded. "Stick it out. Don't be a fool. You got a career to think of."

They didn't have to tell Ilsa that he'd be going back in another week or more. She was counting the days. . .

NOW she stood there under the street lamp near an alley in this dreary, dingy little town, staring up into the handsome features of her war-hero husband, fighting to control her emotions, wishing to God that she could tell him exactly how she felt.

John took his hands from her shoulders, touched her lovely little nose lightly with a big closed fist in mock reproach.

"Get a grip on yourself, baby. Nothing can hurt us," he said.

Ilsa fought to contain herself. She detested the way he called her "baby." She'd thought it cute, once. But now it was cheap, stupid. Like the cheap, stupid life that the idiot thought he could drag her down to.

She wanted to scream at him that the days when Ilsa Perry had to live frugally, almost niggardly—the days when Ilsa Perry had to live in cheap hotels and eat in cheap restaurants—were long past and that he could never drag her back to them.

He was grinning now, his teeth, white and even against the clean bronze of his skin.

"Come on, baby. Let's perk up. We've still got a few hours left together. Let's not think about anything else."

Ilsa closed her eyes, her lovely hands clenching and unclenching into angry fists. Then she forced a smile.

"All right, John. I'll try."

But John was already trying to change the subject, to strike a light hearted note. He was staring across the street at something.

"Say, baby. Look over there. What on earth can that be?"

Ilsa turned instinctively, her eyes moving in the direction his finger pointed.

All she saw was a line of drab little shop fronts, the wooden frame-work of which was smoke-gray and paint-peeled.

"See that little shop in the center of the bunch?" John demanded. "The one with all the junk in the window?"

Ilsa saw the shop he referred to. It was incredibly junky, to judge from the conglomeration of curious objects piled in view before its dirty windows.

"Yes," she said flatly. "It's a disgusting little place, isn't it?"

John looked goodnaturedly surprised. "Disgusting?" he echoed indignantly. "Why, baby, the place looks marvelous. I've never seen such a fascinating collection of junk in all my life. What say we go over and have a look?"

ILSA was about to protest. Then she changed her mind. It was just a matter of hours, she told herself grimly. Just a matter of hours. Let the fool prowl around in the dirty little shop if he liked. That was the sort of thing

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his childish mentality appreciated best. Make the idiot happy.

John took her arm, and they crossed the street together. When they were a few feet away from the shop, they were able to make out the faded lettering on its windows.

*"The Curio Studio—Unusual Items"*

John read the inscription aloud, and it irritated her to hear him do so. Did he think she couldn't read?

Then they were standing in front of the littered windows, and John was chuckling delightedly at the mad array of items heaped in them.

"Look, baby. An Algerian sword, and those prayer rugs. Say, what do you know—isn't that the darndest looking lamp you ever saw? Looks like some of the ones I ran into in China."

There were innumerable other items of all descriptions. Chairs of early New England stamp, conch shells from Africa, old coins dating to Caesar, a tricornered hat of the Napoleonic era, snuff boxes of Colonial vintage, chains and fetlocks that might have been relics of slaving days, a vest of chain mail looking like it might have been used in the Crusades. All that, and much, much more. John pointed out each item enthusiastically, happily unaware that his ardor was not shared by Ilsa.

"Where do you suppose that thing came from?" John was saying, "And what do you suppose it was used for?"

It was then that the little bell in the shop door tinkled, and the door opened to reveal the proprietor of the shop standing there smiling at him.

They didn't notice him for the first few moments. And then he spoke.

"Why don't you come inside? There are many fascinating items here."

They turned at the sound of his rich, deep, melodious voice. They turned and saw an immense figure of a man, a person of Falstaffian paunch and unusual height, a man with a head of silken, carefully combed white hair, and a fat, red, jovial face half hidden by a cleanly trimmed moustache and spade beard. His moustache and beard were as white and silken as his hair. He was smiling amiably at them.

John answered him, touching Ilsa's arm eagerly as he did so.

"Thank you, I'd certainly like to. But we're not quite solvent enough to buy anything."

Ilsa shuddered at this last remark of John's in reference to his financial state. The boor—cheerfully presenting them as paupers. The thought that she had a salary of several thousand dollars a week was enough to make her humiliation doubly obnoxious.

"You aren't obliged to buy," the gargantuan proprietor was answering smilingly. "I enjoy showing my things to people who are appreciative of them. That is often more than enough remuneration for me. Do come in."

"Thanks," John grinned. He slipped his arm around Ilsa's waist, and before she could collect herself, was ushering her into the shop in the wake of the huge, white haired proprietor.

Ilsa knew instantly that she loathed the little place.

THE musty odors that struck her nostrils as they entered were enough to make her detest it. But the dim light, the crowded, junk-littered aisles, and the general gloom and dustiness of the place added further to her distaste. Too, it seemed damp, and your voice when it rang forth came with a sort of echoing, hollow sound that was disquieting to the nerves. It was the proprietor's voice that was ringing forth now.

"I scarcely know where to begin," he was saying. "It might be best just

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to let you browse around, poke about a bit. But I think it will be more fun if I conduct your tour. You see, almost every object in this shop entailed no little search on my part. Many of them, I have journeyed to distant lands to find."

The huge shopkeeper paused before a silken gown carelessly draped over the top of a counter. He turned to face Ilsa and John, smiling reminiscently as he touched the hem of the garment gently to point it out.

"This robe," he said, "I picked up in Tibet. It was once worn by a lovely lady believed to be a Goddess by the natives."

Ilsa scarcely heard the huge old man as he went on into a short narration on the history of the gown. She was making a conscious effort not to listen. She looked about the weird little place with lofty, obvious distain. She hoped to snub the proprietor into silence and thereby cut short this dismal "tour" of a stinking little antique mart. Several times, during this display of rudeness, she glanced covertly at the tremendous old man to see if he noticed it. It seemed to her as if he did notice it, but was not offeneded. He was smiling broadly as he went on with his narrative.

The articles he pointed out, and those that had "histories" which he briefly sketched, were endlessly piled throughout the place. And Ilsa found herself, a good half hour later, moving along behind John and the proprietor to another gloomy corner of the shop where, their host assured them, there were still other items to see.

Ilsa was now fretfully angry and brazenly insulting in her manner. She yawned, stared frostily, glanced at her watch, and tapped her foot impatiently while the old man talked.

John had begun to notice this, and was obviously growing somewhat uncomfortable over her state of mind. But as they stepped to the corner of the room, his sudden exclamation was evidence that his thoughts were suddenly again oblivious to everything but the curio shop.

"Good Lord!" he cried. "What on earth is that painting?"

Even Ilsa forgot herself long enough to move up hastily beside John and the old man to see what it was that they were staring at. The tone of John's voice had been arresting enough to arouse her curiosity.

It was a canvas some four feet long and two feet wide, handsomely framed in old fashioned oak and gold. It lay atop a small stand in the very corner of the room, several yards from them, secured from reach by piles of bric-brac which lay between.

It was, obviously, a painting. And yet, it was, just as obviously, a painting of nothing. Nothing, that is, but a blue gray vapor, a writhing mist in which there was no form, no line—and yet, substance.

AS ILSA stared at it, she felt a curious compulsion to move back, and away from it. It seemed almost alive, almost moving, writhing. And then the old man's voice broke the illusion.

"It seems to be possessed with life of its own, doesn't it?" he chuckled.

"Good God, yes!" John exclaimed.

"An illusion, of course," said the old man. "A most remarkable illusion of line. Yet no line is apparent to it, though lines are there. Neither is substance certain, though substance is there."

"But, but what is it?" John demanded. "It isn't a painting of anything at all, is it? It's just a study in the motion of line. Is that right?"

The towering old shopkeeper shook

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his head.

"Not exactly," he said. "You see, this, ah, painting, has a very peculiar history. It dates back to the Middle Ages. It is called the 'Painting of the Prophet.'"

"Painting of the Prophet?" John echoed puzzledly.

The massive, white bearded old man nodded solemnly. "Yes. The Prophet was a Monk. A certain Friar Boniface. He was a very saintly, very talented, and very peculiar old gentleman. In a minor way he had established a reputation in his country as a sort of Nostradamus, a foreteller of the future."

"Ohhh, I see," John exclaimed. "Then he painted this, and, being a prophet, the painting was named as it is?"

"That is correct," said the old man. "He was an unusually talented artist, and most of his work was futuristic and prophetic in nature."

"Actually so?" John asked. "I mean, were his painting forecasts correct?"

The old man smiled, shrugged. "I really couldn't say. You see, all but this painting was destroyed. The good Friar Boniface's minor fame as a prophet did not please his superior at the Abbey, a very jealous monk named Paul. Friar Paul, it seems, accused Friar Boniface of having league with the Devil. He maintained that good Boniface's insight to the future came from Lucifer, rather than heaven. He finally succeeded in having Friar Boniface formally imprisoned for trial as a heritical fiend in league with Satan."

The old shopkeeper paused, ran his well manicured hand through his silken white hair. He smiled at John and Ilsa.

"The rest of the story is tragic. Friar Paul had all of Friar Boniface's paintings publicly burned. The old monk, Friar Boniface, was imprisoned in a local castle. There, he found, somehow, canvas and oils of a sort which enabled him to paint this, his last, work."

"But wasn't this known to the jealous Friar, or to Boniface's captors?" John demanded.

The massive old man shook his head. "No. The work was done secretly. It is believed that a jailer, a confidant of the persecuted old Monk's, perhaps, was in on the secret. Possibly he smuggled Friar Boniface the crude materials with which to work. At any rate, this last painting of the prophet Friar's was smuggled out of the castle prison without anyone's knowledge. It was hidden away in an old church. There it was discovered many many years later. I bought it from the poor curate who had found it."

"What came of Friar Boniface's trial?"

"He was convicted; he died on the rack, poor old man, still maintaining his innocence. He prayed for God to forgive his tormentors. If I were God, I'm sure I wouldn't forgive them."

John shook his head. "That's really quite a story."

"And it's really quite true," said the old man. "At least that much of it. The rest, I suppose, you could call superstition."

"The rest?" John asked.

"Yes, you see all the Friar's paintings, until this one, had been paintings of prophecy," the old man said. "It seemed peculiar to those who knew that small, unimportant fragment of history, that the poor old man's last work should be nothing but a most unusual study in line and motion. It seemed odd that the old monk's final masterpiece, you might say, was not also a prophecy in painting."

John nodded reflectively. "It does seem odd, at that."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Perhaps," said the old shopkeeper, "that is what started the superstition about this painting. The superstition is that this picture you're looking at now, is actually old Friar Boniface's ultimate gift to posterity—a painting that is capable of all-encompassing prophecy."

John frowned. "I don't believe I understand."

THE old man smiled. "Of course not. It's quite fantastic. However, the superstition claims that this painting can predict anything of the future one desires to know."

"But it's only a blur of gray and—" John began.

"I know," the old man said. "However, the superstition maintains that the apparently moving blur of blue-gray on that canvas is but an animated curtain, concealing innumerable paintings of prophecy beneath it."

"You mean a wash of the canvas—" John started.

The old man cut him off, shaking his head. "No. I don't mean that. The blue of gray you see now is supposed to leave the picture when a prophecy is about to be revealed. When the blur is gone, a painting is supposed to be visible beneath. A painting predicting whatever vision of the future one desires. The forecast stated in oils, then the blur comes back to cover the canvas until the next prediction is desired."

"Why, that's fascinating. Utterly fantastic, as you said, but really interesting," John exclaimed.

The old man's smile this time was even more kindly.

"Yes," he said. "It is indeed interesting."

Ilsa had endured all she could. Her voice was sharp, rude, as she broke in. "May I make a prediction?"

John, not noticing her tight-lipped expression, grinned and said, "Go right ahead, baby."

"I predict that I'll be too exhausted to stand, if we don't leave at once." She turned an acrid sweet smile on the old shopkeeper.

"I'm sure," she said, voice thick with irony, "that we've monopolized much too much of your time. Thank you. I'm sure John enjoyed himself. Quaint bric-brac and old wives tales have always been amusing to him."

John flushed in embarrassment at his wife's obvious sarcasm. He turned, red-faced, to the old man, starting to speak.

The huge old storekeeper intercepted his words.

"I've really enjoyed this," he smiled. "Perhaps we've been inconsiderate of your wife in our mutual interest of the curios. However, I do wish you'd both drop in again. It was most enjoyable to show you around. There's much much more to be seen, you know."

"I'm sure there is," Ilsa snapped.

"I'd really like to," John declared. "Maybe I'll be able to do so. Perhaps tomorrow night."

"I can think of nothing," purred Ilsa nastily, "more delightful."

John took her arm, flushing in embarrassment again, and started toward the door. The old shopkeeper was still smiling warmly, was still unruffled. He followed them to the door and bade them both goodnight. . .

BACK in their small hotel room, John turned to Ilsa.

"Why were you so rude to that old fellow, baby?" he demanded.

Ilsa had just removed her coat. She was peering into the dresser mirror, wiping lipstick from her mouth with a handkerchief. She turned to face her husband, her lovely features hard in anger.

"Did it ever occur to you that your

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tours through junk shops bored me to death? Did it ever occur to you that —" she saw the look on John's face, and a sudden shrewdness made her change her sentence, "that you'll be leaving any moment, any hour, any day, and that the time we've left together shouldn't be wasted over trinkets and paintings?"

The hurt drained from John's face, and contrition came to his eyes.

"God, I'm sorry, baby. I didn't think. It was stupid of me, utterly selfish. I wanted only to change your mood when you were feeling so low there under the street lamp. When we started touring the little shop, I guess I got carried away. Forgive me, will you?"

Ilsa laughed within herself. He was such a fool. Such a damned fool. She congratulated herself on her cleverness in having sidestepped a nasty scene and regained her control. Hell, there were only a few hours, maybe a day or so more, remaining. She'd be crazy to risk a break with the boob before he left.

She smiled at him, contempt hidden behind her baby blue eyes. He was a boob, a loathsome nobody, an irksome dolt. But he was undeniably handsome. . . . and there was a great deal of animal in Ilsa Perry. She held out her arms.

"I forgive you, darling," she purred.

. . .

THE ringing of the telephone woke Ilsa the following morning. She opened her eyes and saw that John, sitting on the edge of the bed, had answered it. His conversation came somewhat fuzzily to her sleep-webbed mind.

"Yes. Yes, Sir. At once."

There was a pause.

"No, of course not. So long as I can get back here for a few hours this evening. Fine. Thank you, Sir."

He put the telephone in the cradle, turned to see if Ilsa had been wakened.

"Ilsa?" he asked softly.

Ilsa had closed her eyes swiftly, and was feigning sleep. Her heart, however, was hammering excitedly, joyously, and the fog of sleep had cleared from her mind.

She heard her husband whisper her name cautiously once again, then sigh. He rose from the bed, obviously sure that she was still asleep.

Ilsa heard him dressing swiftly, heard the splash of water in the bathroom as he washed and shaved. She kept her eyes closed. But she thought: *It's come. He's going to ship out. That's what the call was. He's shipping out today. Tonight, probably. That's probably what he meant about getting back here for a few hours this evening. Yes, that's it. He's shipping tonight. If it were this morning, he'd wake me to say goodbye.*

She heard him return to the bedroom, sensed, rather than heard, him slip into his coat. Then she heard him pause by the writing desk, heard a pencil scratching on paper.

His footsteps returned to her bedside. The clean, astringent, masculine smell of his cheek was suddenly close to her.

Then she felt his light, almost reverent kiss on her lips.

The door closed softly behind him a moment later and he was gone.

Ilsa waited a few moments. He might come back. He might have forgotten something. No. It was safe now to "wake up." She opened her eyes, sprang out of bed.

Breathlessly she moved to the writing desk. There was a sheet of stationery there, and on it was a note in his hand.

"Darling," it read. "Didn't want to wake you. Am on shipping alert for

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

midnight. Just got a call to that effect. Will be able to be back here at six tonight, but will have to get back to the base by ten o'clock. That will give us at least three wonderful hours of goodbye. Love, John."

Ilsa read the note twice more, and each reading made her joy greater. She felt suddenly, utterly free. It was wonderful, glorious, like being released from a nightmare.

She wanted to laugh, to sing. But she did neither. She went back to the bed, found her cigarettes on the night table beside it, lighted one, and leaned back rapturously on the pillows, her mouth set in a smile of triumph.

Before she woke to face another morning, she would be rid of him. The thought was almost too wonderful to bear.

Suddenly she leaned forward and picked up the telephone from its cradle on the night table.

"Operator," she said a moment later, "I want to place a long distance call. To Hollywood. That's right. Hollywood, California."

SHE gave the operator the number she wanted. Then she hummed lightly for a moment.

"All right, operator. Call me back as soon as the connection is through."

Ilsa smoked several more cigarettes before the telephone rang. She picked it up eagerly.

"Hello, Bert," she purred, "you old dear."

Bert Talbot, Ilsa's number one publicity man, seemed surprised.

"What on earth is up, Ilsa? Why are you calling me at this hour?"

"Don't you like it?" Ilsa was coy.

"My God," Bert said. "Don't be kittenish, darling. Of course I like it. I'm thrilled to the marrow. Only, how come you're calling at this early hour?"

"John's moving out," Ilsa said exuberantly.

"You've had a fight?" Bert's voice was suddenly panicky.

"Nooooo," Ilsa was patient, amused. "No, darling. I mean shipping out. He'll be heading overseas in a matter of hours. Isn't it heavenly?"

Bert's tone was guarded. "That's fine, darling. That's just swell, if that's how you want it."

"That's how I want it," Ilsa said, a trifle sharply.

"Sure, sure," said Bert Talbot. "Well that's just grand. That means we'll be seeing you very shortly, huh? You can count on our having everyone at the airport to meet you."

"I don't think I want to come right back to the studio, Bert," Ilsa said slyly. "I think I want about a week's vacation. I need it."

"Sure, sure, darling, anything you like," Talbot said. "Take a week if you want it, kid. You've earned it."

"I want to go to Brandon Lodge," Ilsa said. "Tomorrow."

Brandan Lodge was a mountain resort, an exclusive playground for the financially and socially solvent.

"Uh-huh," Bert said, his voice growing guarded again.

"With you, darling," Ilsa added impishly. "There's that lovely eight room cabin there. It's almost deserted at the lodge this time of year. We can be positively alone—together."

There was a loud silence on the other end of the wire.

"Bert," Ilsa said irritably, "what did you say?"

"My God!" her press agent exclaimed. "My God!"

"Bert!" Ilsa's voice was angered. "What do you mean by that? We've been there before together and—"

"But you're married, now. You're married to a war hero. He's going back

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

overseas. You can't afford to risk a clandestine meeting in a luxury lodge under those circumstances. My God, Ilsa, I appreciate your delightful little thoughtfulness of me as a partner. But it just won't go. Why, if anything leaked out in the newspapers, or even in gossip, I'd lose my job at the studio, and you'd be washed up as a star!"

"Bert!" wailed Ilsa. 'He's leaving. He'll be gone. My God, I don't have to carry this on any longer, now that he's going, do I?"

Bert's answer was emphatic.

"My God, Ilsa. Just because he's going over doesn't mean that he's any less your husband in the public eye. It's all the more reason for you to keep up a front. Wife on home front, if you get me. Stiff upper lip, smiling through tears, waiting for him to return. You know the angle. Great schmalz—the public'll gobble it up."

"But Bert!" wailed Ilsa.

"Look, darling," her press agent was talking rapidly, urgently. "Just because we begged you to stick it out until he left, and gave you a million concrete reasons why it was the only smart thing to do, that didn't mean anything but that you wouldn't have to have him around personally after he'd gone. We didn't mean that you'd then be free to raise hell and kick over the traces because he was out of your way."

"But Bert!" Ilsa began again.

Her press agent wouldn't let her get started.

"You gotta remember, darling, he isn't dead, and you can't divorce him, not until the war's over. Then it won't mean a damn thing. There's nothing you can do about it, if you value your career. If he got knocked off in some air battle, that'd be different, after a few months. But as it is, you gotta play patience, kid. That's all there is to it."

Ilsa didn't answer. Her mouth was tight with anger, and her lovely eyes sparkling wrath. She slammed the telephone down on its cradle, ending the conversation.

For several hours she paced the room like a female panther, chain-smoking cigarettes, smashing out the stubs savagely on the glass top of the dresser.

"I hope to God they get him. I hope to God those little Japs blow his bomber to bits!" she muttered time and time again.

Finally, still enraged, she dressed and left the hotel. . . .

ILSA walked furiously, aimlessly through the drab streets of the dreary little town for over an hour. Finding herself at last near a small restaurant, she entered and ordered breakfast.

The breakfast was surprisingly tempting. But Ilsa had little appetite for it. Her anger had filled her until there was no room for anything but its aching sickness.

She left the restaurant some ten minutes later, and began her aimless walking again.

It must have been twenty minutes later when she realized that she had gone from one end of the little town to the other, and was starting back in the direction of the dingy hotel again.

Her rage and her furious pace had exhausted her a little, and now she walked more slowly, conscious, for the first time, of the things surrounding her.

It was then that, with sharp remembrance, she realized that she was on the same street in which John had found the dreadful little curio shop the night before.

And it was almost before she realized it, that she found herself directly across the street from it.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She was not able to explain to herself why she paused there. Nor was she able to explain why she suddenly crossed the street and stepped up to the window of the little curio store.

She knew only that something had prompted her to do what she did, without being conscious of what that something was.

But she stood there, staring at the array of curios behind the murkily filtering light of the little shop's greasy windows.

It was then that the bell of the shop door tinkled. It was then that Ilsa looked up and saw the towering old man with the white beard and the white moustache and white hair, smiling amiably in recognition.

"Good morning," he said. "It's nice to see you again. Won't you step in?"

His voice was as rich and mellow as Ilsa remembered its being the night before.

She started to say something brittle and insulting, but instead heard herself saying, "Why, yes. Yes, I will. Thank you."

The old man didn't answer this. He merely smiled, opened the door widely to permit her to enter, then followed her inside.

The sharp, damp musty smell of the place was the same as it had been the previous night. It was also just as gloomy and dark inside as before. The littered shelves, the narrow aisle, everything was the same.

Ilsa turned to face the old man. She didn't know what to say, how to begin, although she knew why she was here. She knew, though it was mad, idiotic, utterly ridiculous, that she wanted to see—

"You'd like to see the prophet's painting?" the old man's voice broke in on her thoughts.

Ilsa flushed, startled.

The old man was smiling warmly at her. She found a strange courage from this.

"Yes," she said. "As a matter of fact I would like to. I know it's silly of me, but I, ah—" she faltered.

"There's something you'd like to know," said the huge old man, and his smile was even more understanding and kindly than before, "about the future."

The expression on Ilsa's face made the old man's smile even more richly engraved on his warm, reassuring features.

"You feel somewhat foolish for having come here, I know," he said understandingly. "And yet many people have their palms read, their horoscopes foretold, their futures predicted, in a thousand silly little ways day after day, and never feel foolish about the faint, unshakable hope they have in them afterwards."

IF ILSA had felt she needed some shred of justification in what she was about to do, the old man's words gave her just that. Not that they contained any particular logic when analyzed. It was the reassuring manner in which they were spoken—the solid, trustworthy timbre of the voice that gave them sound.

"Yes," she said, "I would like—"

The old man held up his hand.

"You needn't tell me what you would like to know. Suppose we go to the painting of the prophet. Perhaps, if you stand there before it, concentrating utterly on one key word containing the essence of what you seek to learn, you may be rewarded with the glimpse of the future you seek."

Ilsa was scarcely aware that she was following the old man down the crowded little aisle of the shop toward the corner where the painting was. She

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was thinking: *I must know. I have to know. Will he die in combat? Will his bomber fail to return from some mission? Will I be free of him? Will he be killed, this time?*

They stopped before the picture, and it was fully a minute before Ilsa's eyes adjusted themselves to the gloom of the corner in which it reposed. Then she was able to see the handsome old fashioned frame of oak and gold.

It was a moment later when she made out the blue gray movement of of it, the vaporish mist that lent it substance, gave essence to the nothingness of its canvas.

The old man spoke.

"I shall be discreet enough to retire to the front of the shop. Remember, concentrate solely on a key word. Perhaps you will be fortunate enough to find what you want revealed."

Ilsa nodded mutely, and the old man moved noiselessly off.

She shivered uncontrollably an instant, then closed her eyes. She sought for a key word on which to concentrate. The mental image of John's plane was in her mind. She could think of a key word now.

"Death," she whispered softly. "Death."

She closed her eyes again, clenching her hands into fists. Her palms were moist; faint perspiration beaded her brow.

"Death," she whispered.

She concentrated to the utmost power of her will on that word. She heard it then.

It was almost inaudible. It was a sound similar to nothing she had ever heard before, soft, sibilant, something like silk slithering against silk, and yet not that.

She opened her eyes.

The vapor which had been the shroud of the canvas was parting. It moved back to either side, vanishing into nothingness, like a curtain parting into wings of blackness.

And the painting of the prophet revealed—a painting!

It was faint, foggily obscure, but she was able to discern the line of it, the meaning of it. She could see it well enough to know instantly, clearly, what it was.

It was an object smashed and twisted and smouldering against the jagged rocks of a huge mountain. It was the tortured, smoking framework of a large plane, crumpled like a bird in death splattered against a ragged masonry of stone.

"John's ship!"

The words came in an involuntary gasp from her lips. Then, instantly, she put her hand to her mouth.

Her heart was pounding madly, and she felt a wild, dizzying giddiness that left her weak with exultation.

The vapor had reappeared and was now covering the canvas again, but Ilsa didn't notice.

She had turned, and was walking quickly back up the aisle to the front of the shop, her heels clicking the furious tempo of her heartbeats.

*"He'll die. He'll get it. He won't come back. I'm free!"*

The words rang again and again through her mind, with the wild, pealing insistence of bells caroling the chorus of a chant.

*"John will die. John will die. I'll be free!"*

The old man was waiting for her in the front of the shop. The dazed glance she gave him showed scarcely recognition. She was laughing now, and tears were running down her cheeks.

"You are pleased," he said kindly.

"You'll never know how pleased," she said. "It's wonderful. It's incredibly wonderful."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hastily she searched her handbag, found three hundred dollar bills in a place where she had secreted them against John's knowledge.

She stuffed these into the old man's hand, and, without another word, dashed from the shop. . .

AT THE desk in the hotel, the clerk stopped her.

"Your husband telephoned," he said. "It was urgent. He left a message that he had to leave sooner than he expected. He will not be back this evening. He says he will get in touch with you just as soon as possible."

This was marvelous! This was too perfect for words! John was shipping out sooner than he'd thought. He wouldn't be able to get back. There'd be no mushy farewells. She'd not have to put up with him another instant. Not another instant in all her life. He was leaving, and she'd never have to see him again!

She tried to look composed, for the benefit of the desk clerk.

"Thank you," she said. "I understand." Then: "Will you place a long distance call for me? To Hollywood? I want Mr. Talbot, at the Cosmos Picture Corporation."

Ilsa turned for the elevator as the clerk wrote this down. Then she stopped, turned back.

"And I'd like you to get a plane reservation for me. Call the airport and find out what's the quickest plane to Los Angeles, will you?"

When she walked to the elevator, on her way to her room, she was humming. . .

* * *

Headline, *Los Angeles Times,*
Date-lined, following day . . .

"ILSA PERRY, SCREEN STAR, DIES IN AIRLINER CRASH ENROUTE HOLLYWOOD

Seven Others Perish In
Passenger Ship Smashup
Over Nevada Mountains

Ilsa Perry, glamorous star of Cosmos Pictures, in private life the wife of heroic Army Airman, Sgt. John Carrin, died late last night in an airliner tragedy, when the plane in which she was returning from a sojourn with her husband crashed into the Sierra Nevada chain north of Las Vegas . . ."

THE END

## THE LUCK THAT FAILED

By PETE BOGG

THE occasions whereby men have made their fortunes through science and scientific inventions have been publicized, but we seldom hear of the investors who lost most of their savings, of the inventions that failed.

Unique among investors was Mark Twain, the creator of "Tom Sawyer." He made vast profits from his books and lectures, but every time he tried to invest his money he exercised the poorest of judgments. Of course, there was the element of uncertainty present that every investor must accept as a gamble. But Mark Twain's ventures were consistent failures. He invested in a patent steam generator that wouldn't generate. He invested in a watch company that didn't tick long enough to pay its first dividend. He invested in a steam pulley that wouldn't work. He started a publishing company that failed. He invested heavily in a machine that was supposed to set type and lost about a fifth of a million dollars.

But Twain's outstanding blunder occurred when he met a young inventor named Alexander Graham Bell. Bell tried to interest Mark in his new-fangled invention which he chose to call the telephone. Bell's claim that with his invention you could sit in your own house and talk to someone five blocks away over a wire—brought only laughter from the writer. Twain claimed he might be considered a fool, but he wasn't an idiot—and the chance of a lifetime was laughed aside.

Instead of investing five hundred dollars in telephone stock, however, Mark Twain loaned it to a friend who went bankrupt three days later. Twain's luck was not all bad. He lived to the ripe old age of seventy-six and endeared himself to millions with his stories and his humor. In literature he lives on; his sad experiences with science and inventors throws an interesting light on the more gullible side of his nature.

* * *

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# ROMANCE OF THE ELEMENTS

**By ROD RUTH**

The story of Hafnium, a quadrivalent metallic element discovered in 1922 in a Norwegian zircon. Its symbol is Hf, its atomic number is 72, atomic weight 178.6



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

From out of nowhere, it seemed, an arm and a fist shot out and hit his jaw . . .



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# When The Spirit Moves Me

by LEE FRANCIS

**Willowby Jones had moving trouble. It seemed that the apartment he rented already had an occupant. But the occupant was dead.**

WILLOWBY JONES hesitated before the battered, glass-paneled door. He adjusted the brown tie, smoothed his coat lapels and cleared his throat. Applying his finger lightly to the door-bell, he listened to the resulting sound in the hall. He waited for several minutes and decided that another ring might not be too many.

Evidently his first summons had been heard. Before he could touch the button again the door opened a crack and a wrinkled, worn face peeked out at him. The old lady had stern eyes that swept swiftly over Willowby's slight form. Then she threw the door open wide and motioned him inside.

"You'd be the young man to see about the apartment?"

Willowby wasn't favorably impressed with what he saw, but with the housing shortage so acute, he couldn't afford to be choosy. He mumbled a confirmation to her question and followed her into the musty hall.

"I'm so glad to see you, Mr. —" the old lady queried with friendly eyes.

Willowby mumbled: "Willowby Jones, mam."

"Oh, yes, Mr. Jones. I'm so glad to see you. It's been so long since I've had a nice young man in the house, Ever since Homer died I've been so lonely . . ."

She kept on talking as she led Willowby to the apartment for rent. But Jones wasn't interested in what she had to say, mainly about Homer and what a nice young man he had been. Jones wanted a flat, if he had to listen to get one, he would listen.

The flat wasn't much to look at, barren floor space and antiquated lighting fixtures, but it had a roof over it and that was something. As soon as he could, Jones mentioned rent, and the old lady shrugged.

"I'll want fifty dollars a month."

Jones breathed a sigh. It was a lot cheaper than he had expected. "That'll be just fine, Mrs. —"

"Dillwiddy . . . just Mrs. Dillwiddy."

Willowby nodded and handed over a month's rent.

"You—aren't the type of young man who has wild parties, are you?" Mrs. Dillwiddy asked.

"Oh dear no!" Willowby thought of the huge selection of apartments he had visited just *after* they had been rented. "I'm sure we'll get along very nicely."

Mrs. Dillwiddy smiled uncertainly.

"I'm only hoping that Homer won't object," she murmured. "Homer is so head-strong at times."

Willowby felt little electric sparks shooting up and down his neck. He gulped, and his adam's-apple quivered



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

upward and settled back slowly.

*"Homer?"*

Mrs. Dillwiddy nodded, smiling brightly.

"Homer is so dissatisfied with his present surroundings, that he returns occasionally to make sure I'm all right. I'm sure you won't mind *him.*"

Willowby felt suddenly as though the long flight of steps that led to the sidewalk was wavering under him. He was dizzy and his throat felt dry.

"Oh no," he said, "I—that is—we'll get along all right."

He held the rail with both hands and started downward. Behind him he heard the door close as Mrs. Dillwiddy retired to the dimly lighted hall.

Willowby Jones would be very glad when a person could find a place to live where ghosts didn't return to check up on living conditions.

MR. FOX of the Fox & Laird Advertising Agency met Willowby Jones as he came into the office on Monday morning. Mr. Fox could say the nicest things in the most sarcastic manner.

"I hope you've finally found a nice place, Jones," his comment was tinged with just the tiniest touch of sarcasm. "It seems to me that most of our employees are spending half their time finding apartments and remainder, sleeping in them."

Willowby had taken Friday off.

In years past, one day away from the office might have cost him his job. Since Philbert Useless Quinby came into Willowby's life, Jones' prestige was slightly higher. He occasionally exercised the prestige.

"I'm well taken care of, thank you," he said, "If you'll come into my office, I'll go over the Barbarous Blond account with you."

Mr. Fox stiffened. Willowby's newfound self respect was a thorn in his side. The agency was fast becoming too small for both Mr. Fox and Mr. Jones.

"Sorry," Fox sniffed. "You'll just have to carry on. I haven't the time."

He turned and charged into his private office. Willowby, a ghost of a smile on his peaked face, headed immediately for his own office. He stopped on the way to lean over Bernice Adams and plant a quick kiss on her cheek.

Everything might have gone smoothly enough, had it not been for the Never-A-Care-Insurance Company and Mr. Blackhead. Mr. Blackhead was a cadaverous, anemic individual who had been after Fox & Laird for a series of "This Might Happen to You" magazine lay-outs. Mr. Blackhead was in conference with Mr. Fox until noon. As Willowby left for lunch, Mr. Fox poked an unpleasant puss out of his door and requested Jones' presence at once.

Willowby entered what the employees were pleased to call Fox's den, and shook hands with the important Mr. Blackhead. He was reminded at once of several undertakers he knew. However, he learned quickly that Blackhead was concerned with prolonging life rather that disposing of the dead.

"Mr. Blackhead," Fox explained coldly, "wants a series of ten full page color ads to be run in five national magazines."

Willowby puckered his lips, then caught himself just as he was about to whistle.

"That's—interesting," he admitted.

Fox grunted.

"I'll have to ask you to handle the job, Jones," he said. "You can use one of the technical department's cameras. Get some accident shots by following the police calls, and prepare the lay-outs for them. *I'm sure you'll have*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*the time to do it easily.*"

Willowby remembered that Fox was still president, and escaped as gracefully as possible. An hour later it dawned on him that he was called upon to do three-quarters of the work with very little of the cash that went with it.

A sense of duty was still strong in Willowby's life. He left the office that evening with a camera and a strong feeling that Fox was once more telling him what to do, and enjoying it considerably.

JONES realized that Mrs. Dillwiddy's mind was slightly off the trail, and that he couldn't take anything she said very seriously. However, with his furniture moved into the second floor rooms, the fireplace clean and ready for use, he approached the Ontario Street mansion anticipating a certain amount of pleasure.

Mrs. Dillwiddy had supplied him with a key and he let himself in quietly. To his surprise, he heard Mrs. Dillwiddy talking to someone in a room just off the hall. He started quietly up the stairs, but Mrs. Dillwiddy's voice was so filled with excitement, that he paused for a moment to listen.

"But Oscar," the old lady was protesting, "you just can't do it. We don't go about killing people because they are in the way."

Willowby's goose-flesh was giving him a little trouble.

"The boy's really very nice," Mrs. Dillwiddy's voice continued. "I'm sure everything will work out all right. Of course, we could hide him in the basement, but they'd surely find him sooner or later."

Something snapped inside Willowby's skull and he knew that after tonight he'd never be troubled again by jumpy nerves. His legs propelled him up the stairs, but at the door of his room, he halted, eyes wide with horor.

*His apartment was empty.*

He had watched the movers carry furniture up here and had arranged it himself. He had layed out his clothing and hung his suits in the closet.

*Everything was gone.*

He held the edge of the door tightly, and then moved slowly inside, wondering what to do next. The two rooms were just as they had been the day he first came.

He turned and stared back down the stairs, wondering if he had climbed an extra flight by mistake. No! This was the second floor. Perhaps Mrs. Dillwiddy had stolen his furniture? Perhaps this was a den of thieves? He hurried down the hall to be confronted by his landlady on the bottom step.

With a coy little gesture of pleasure, she waited until he was at her side.

"Good evening, Mr. Jones. I do hope the rooms are pleasant."

"They're not," he said abruptly. "They're empty."

To his surprise, she didn't even gasp. They continued to stand there, the old lady evidently seeking an explanation. Her fingers fluttered to her hair and attempted to straighten a stray lock.

"Not *really* empty? she protested "Perhaps you should try the third floor. There *is* one, you know."

"Thanks," Willoby mumbled and turned to climb once more. Then what she had said dawned on him. He pivoted quickly. "But—I didn't move to the third floor," he protested. "I moved to the second."

Mrs. Dillwiddy appeared very hurt.

"I *still* think you'd be nice enough to *try* the third," she cried impatiently. "After all, you did promise to cooperate."

Willowby wondered if he should go quietly mad now, or prolong the agony.

"All right," he wailed. "But I'm

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sure I moved to the second floor."

He climbed upward once more, and Mrs. Dillwiddy followed him. He reached the second landing and went on. It was darker up here and the stairs were covered with dust. He reached the third landing.

Through an open door he could see his furniture. It was arranged just as it should be. The two rooms were directly above the ones he had first occupied. He paused at the door, and looked back at his landlady. Mrs. Dillwiddy was regarding him with a self-satisfied smirk.

"Didn't I *tell* you," she said, and went down the stairs with the firm tread of one who has conquered.

Willowby Jones wasn't quite sure whether he should accept such high-handed proceedings. A careful study of the new rooms proved that everything was as it should be. His suits were in the closet. The fire place was lighted and very comforting. Even the window had been washed.

He wondered if it were possible for an old woman to do such a terrific job alone. Then he remembered "Oscar," and shuddered.

*"We could hide him in the basement, but they'd be sure and find him later."*

The Dillwiddy mansion presented some odd problems, but if he used many more days to search for an apartment, Mr. Fox might reach the violent stage. With a sigh of resignation, Willowby settled down to plan an advertising campaign for the Never-A-Care Insurance Company.

WILLOWBY JONES might have answered a hundred police calls and photographed dozens of accidents without getting into trouble. Such, unfortunately was not his luck. He had nearly enough material to start work of the layouts. One more good automobile crack-up would finish the file.

He found it on Michigan Avenue, after trailing the police ambulance for ten minutes. Two large, black sedans had collided, putting a safety zone and a department store window out of commission. Willowby arrived before the occupants of the cars were free, and snapped his pictures immediately.

As Finger McGowand so aptly expressed it some hours later:

"It's just too bad for da joik that got that pic. Now we'll have to rub him out and get the negative."

Finger McGowand was fresh out of Statesville Prison, without benefit of a pardon. He had left on a dark night with the assistance of a file, a saw and some outside co-operation. The *outside co-operation* was furnished by a Chicago mug, one Spike Majowsky. It was Majowsky's car that had been wrecked.

Majowsky, McGowand and two of their hench-men were on their way to Wisconsin. Now Finger had to lay low until they could figure another way out of the police net. Innocently enough, Willowby Jones had a photograph picturing just the people the police would like most to interview.

Willowby retired to his third floor apartment early that night and developed the film in a darkroom he had constructed in the closet.

He had spent a total of half an hour in the closet, and the sight that met his eyes upon emerging was somewhat of a shock. He hurried downstairs immediately and confronted Mrs. Dillwiddy. Willowby had suffered a second terrific mental upheaval.

"Mrs. Dillwiddy," he shouted, as she wandered into the hall. *"This has got to stop."*

Mrs. Dillwiddy fluttered toward him, obviously shaken by her tenant's overwrought condition.

"But I assure you, Mr. Jones," she

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

protested. "I can't imagine what you are talking about."

"My apartment," Willowby howled hysterically. "I've been moved again."

Mrs. Dillwiddy sighed.

"Oh goodness, is *that* all."

Willowby felt blood rise to his scalp. If his landlady was a landlord he thought miserably, he'd take a poke at her.

"I suppose," he suggested caustically "that you can tell me just where the furniture is *this* time."

Mrs. Dillwiddy regarded him as she would a stubborn child.

"Why of course," she said. "If it isn't on the second floor and it isn't on the third, then it has to be. . . ."

Willowby held up a hand for silence.

"Don't tell me," he begged. "Let me guess. Am I now a resident on the first floor?"

"Of *course,*" Mrs. Dillwiddy said. "You should have been able to figure *that* out."

Her words fell upon unresponsive ears. Willowby Jones was moving cautiously toward his new apartment.

WALLACE the Wart was a very wise guy. Wallace had been putting the finger on Spike Majowsky's enemies for half a dozen years. When Wallace went after a guy, he didn't quit until the job was finished.

But Wallace the Wart hadn't planned on a situation like the one that presented itself on Ontario street.

Mrs. Dillwiddy opened the door cautiously and peered out at the short, dark skinned man with the huge wart on his chin.

"Good evening, lady," Wallace greeted her in his best brush-salesman manner. "Is a guy living here by the name of Willowby Jones."

"Let me see," Mrs. Dillwiddy said thoughtfully. "Yes, I believe there is a gentleman on the third floor, or is it the second?"

Wallace the Wart couldn't answer that question. He waited hopefully while Mrs. Dillwiddy tipped her head back and gazed at the cracked ceiling.

"It *is* the third floor," she decided. "Shall I call him?"

"Oh no, not at all lady, the pleasure is mine," Wallace came in quickly feeling much safer than he had with the street light on his back. I'll go up and surprise me old pal, Willowby."

He didn't add that the surprise was a hard bulge of steel in his left coat pocket.

Mrs. Dillwiddy retired to her rooms and Wallace the Wart moved up the broad stairs, on his toes.

He reached the third floor and went stealthily toward the first closed door. He hesitated before it, hearing the sound of footsteps inside. Then, gun in hand, opened the door quickly.

"Up with your mitts, jerk." His voice was low and hoarse.

The room was deserted.

Wallace the Wart stared, his mind not quite up to the situation. He heard footsteps again, much closer this time. Wallace was becoming very nervous for so brave a gent. He backed away slightly and repeated his first message. This time he wasn't so brave and a little quaver of uncertainty entered his voice.

The room was still empty, but the footsteps moved toward him swiftly. He felt something slap him across the lips.

Wallace the Wart wasn't accustomed to such treatment.

"Why you dirty," he shouted. Then he realized that this was no place for a guy who couldn't shoot without a target.

Before he could make his escape, he received two more sharp cracks on the head, and a deep, dignified voice roared

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at him.

"How dare you enter this house, sir. I shall notify the police at once!"

Wallace the Wart didn't stop running until he reached Michigan Avenue. He leaned against a lamp post, trying to catch his breath. After some time he realized that people were staring at him. He wiped two large tears from his cheeks, pulled his hat down over his eyes and hailed a cab.

"Jeeze," he said in an awed voice. "I ain't got nothing in common with no ghosts. Let Spike handle dis himself."

Back in the Dillwiddy mansion Willowby Jones slept peacefully. Mrs. Dillwiddy startled by the sudden retreat of Mr. Jones' visitor, stood in the hall wringing her hands in a distracted manner.

"Oh, dear," she whispered. "Why *can't* I remember. Mr. Jones is on the first floor tonight and I sent that nice gentleman to the third."

WILLOWBY Jones stood in the open door of his first floor apartment. He had been standing there silently for a full minute and growing more angry as each second ticked away.

He hadn't spoken yet, but he knew he should call the police at once.

The man was leaning over Willowby's trunk. His back was turned to Willowby and he was hurriedly throwing Jones' suits into the trunk.

He straightened finally and turned. Willowby was in for another shock. The fellow was much larger than he should have been, and had a face that no mother could ever force herself to love.

The intruder waited very quietly, smiling at Willowby. The smile was very sincere and not unpleasant.

"Good evening, sir," he said.

The greeting put Willowby on the defensive once more, and he had wanted to start a good fight.

"Good evening," Jones murmured. "And, what is going on in here?"

"You're moving again, sir," the stranger said.

Jones felt his cheeks burn.

"*I'm* moving?"

The stranger seemed slightly apologetic.

"Just a figure of speech," he explained. "Actually, I'm moving. But I'm moving your possessions, so it amounts to the same thing."

Willowby hardly knew what approach to use.

"But why?" he asked. "I'm always moving. I've been up and down stairs until I deserve an escalator. I've worn holes in the steps, trying to find a place to sleep. Why do people always pick on me?"

His voice was so plaintive that it affected the intruder.

"I can't really blame you for feeling hurt, sir," he said apologetically. "But you see, it's necessary. It probably saves your life a half dozen times a week."

This, Willowby decided, had gone far enough. Someone explains everything to me and when I leave, I still don't know what's happening.

"Now, listen here," he said in a stern voice. "I want to know who you are and what this moving business is all about?"

The man stiffened slightly and clicked his heels together.

"I'm Oscar," he announced.

Willowby's knees started to fold. He wished he hadn't spoken so harshly.

"The Oscar—who was talking about —hiding someone in the cellar?"

Oscar nodded.

"Yes sir," he admitted. "You see sir, Mrs. Dillwiddy isn't sound of mind. The Master wouldn't approve of hav-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing you here. I have tried to co-operate with both the Master and the Mistress. It's—very difficult, especially when *you* refuse to understand."

"But I *don't* understand," Willowby wailed, "and because I don't, it doesn't seem to make sense."

Oscar looked thoughtful for a moment, then a smile of friendliness lighted his ugly face.

"You make yourself quite clear," he admitted. "I see no harm in telling you. You see, the Master, Homer Dillwiddy has been dead these many years.

"It is the Master's wish that no harm comes to his widow. He returns once each night and spends the evening on one floor of the house."

WILLOWBY knew that he ought to start running at once, and stop somewhere south of the Loop. He was held to the spot by the story Oscar told.

"Your money," Oscar continued delicately, "has helped Mrs. Dillwiddy no end. Therefore, to keep the Master from discovering you, I find that I have to switch you from one floor to the next to avoid having him walk in on you."

Willowby wondered if old Homer ever crossed his wires and spent the night on the wrong floor.

"It—must be quite a job," he admitted meekly. "I appreciate your help, but it *does* bewilder me at times. I find myself awakening in the middle of the night wondering:

*"Willowby, what floor are you on tonight?"*

Oscar looked very sad.

"I do my best sir," he said in a doleful voice. "We all have to face emergencies."

Willowby couldn't help feeling sorry for his own unreasonable attitude.

"I know you do."

Oscar arose rather hurriedly and consulted his watch.

"And now sir, if you'll be so kind as to step outside, I'll move you to the second floor again. Mr. Dillwiddy will be on the first floor tonight."

Willowby wanted to ask for a timetable of Homer Dillwiddy's movements. He decided that such levity was entirely uncalled for.

"May I help you?" he asked. "It's quite a job."

Oscar chuckled.

"Not at all," he said. "I'm a little proud of my accomplishment. Just watch me."

He clapped his hands together stoutly. A white mist filled the room.

Willowby backed into the hall and the mist didn't follow him. He couldn't see a thing inside the room. He heard Oscar muttering in a low voice, then the fog lifted and faded away. The furniture was gone. So was Oscar.

He stared at the empty room with incredulous eyes. He was about to turn away when Oscar's voice sounded from no where. The man-servant was chuckling good naturedly.

"You seem greatly surprised, sir," Oscar's voice said.

"I guess I am," Willowby admitted. "I'm—I'm not quite sure how I feel."

"It's really quite simple," Oscar continued modestly.

"Oh, but it isn't," Willowby protested. "I've never seen a man perform such a miracle."

Oscar was very silent for several seconds, then he chuckled once more and the chuckle changed to infectious laughter. When he had controlled himself enough to speak, his voice came from a spot very close to Willowby's ear.

"But I'm *not* a man, sir," he whispered. "That is, not an ordinary man. I died a year after the Master did. I'm what people so callously call a ghost. *I* prefer to think of myself as a *spirit*."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FINGER McGowand was out to get his man. Spike Majowsky didn't have a bum in his mob who could knock off Willowby Jones. They all told the same story. There wasn't any Jones living on Ontario street. One by one, they had tried every room in the Dillwiddy mansion without finding the illusive Mr. Jones.

Finger approached the Dillwiddy mansion well heeled. He carried a rod and just to make sure, a little time-bomb that he planned to use if Jones was asleep.

Finger was greeted by Mrs. Dillwiddy, who after some deliberation over Mr. Jones's present quarters, directed Finger McGowand to the second floor. There was only one objection to that. Tonight Willowby was sleeping peacefully on the third floor, where Oscar had moved him scantly an hour before.

Finger McGowand received somewhat the same treatment as had Wallace the Wart. However, in Finger's case, the gangster left by way of a second story window, and Homer Dillwiddy's ghost can be pictured rubbing his hands together softly and remarking:

"I *don't* see where my wife ever *finds* such people. Definitely not the type to roam through my home."

However, Finger overlooked something that Wallace the Wart hadn't had to worry about. As he hit the lawn in front of Homer Dillwiddy's home, the time mechanism on the bomb in his pocket was jarred into action.

Exactly five minutes, thirty-two and one-half seconds after Finger McGowand hit the turf, the bomb exploded. Fortunately for Finger's personal feelings about the matter, he was still out cold at the time of the explosion.

It didn't matter much afterwards. Finger wasn't in a position to care much how big a basket he filled.

WILLOWBY JONES wakened the following morning with the song of robins drifting through the window. He dressed carefully, for this was the day Mr. Blackhead would examine his art work and page layouts for the Never-A-Care Insurance campaign.

He greeted Mrs. Dillwiddy with a bright smile, for she was waiting for him at the bottom of the stairs.

"Did you hear the explosion last night, Mrs. Dillwiddy?" he asked pleasantly.

Mrs. Dillwiddy stared at the ceiling for some time, trying to recall something.

"Oh, yes," she said finally. "It *was* a disturbance, wasn't it? Just outside my window. There were a thousand pieces."

Willowby was startled.

"A thousand pieces of what?"

"Oh yes," the landlady smiled sweetly. "The police said they'd never be able to thank me enough."

*"Thank you?"* By this time Willowby was more than curious. "But I don't understand."

Mrs. Dillwiddy placed a comforting hand on his shoulder and chucked him under the chin.

"Don't you try, dear boy. I'm sure he wasn't *really* your friend."

*"Who* wasn't my friend?" Willowby cried desperately.

"The man who blew up outside my window. And to think the police thought *I* did it."

"Now look here, Mrs. Dillwiddy," Willowby protested. "Let's settle down and get this straight. Men don't blow up, that is, outside of Mr. Fox," he added as an afterthought.

"Well," the landlady admitted hesitantly. "They *did* say he was carrying a bomb. It might have been the bomb, but the man blew up *with* it. I insist that he did."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If a man had died last night, Willowby could get a much more satisfactory report from the morning paper. He escaped Mrs. Dillwiddy as hastily as possible and headed for the door.

"And to think I sent him to the second floor and you were transferred to the third only last night." Mrs. Dillwiddy sighed. "Sometimes *I just hate myself* for having such a poor memory."

"MR. FOX," Willowby Jones said. "I have the insurance layouts in my office, if you'll bring Mr. Blackhead in."

Mr. Fox hesitated in his progress across the office and altered his course toward Jones' office.

Mr. Blackhead, looking very solemn, followed dutifully. Once they were inside, Willowby closed the door and pointed across the room to the bulletin board on which he had mounted the group of Never-A-Care Insurance layouts.

The three men stood quietly for a moment, looking over the job. Then Mr. Blackhead cleared his throat nervously and walked toward the board. He leaned close to the last layout Willowby had prepared. It had a painted reproduction of the Michigan Avenue Accident, together with a large photograph of the actual scene. Mr. Blackhead seemed very excited. He pulled the thumbtacks from the layout and hurried with it to the desk, where the light was better. Willowby held his breath while the tall man studied the photograph. When Mr. Blackhead looked up his eyes were very close to twinkling pleasantly.

"Young man," he said in a voice that would have comforted a dying cow. "This picture alone is worth a fortune to our company. If we can get across the idea of carrying insurance, and at the same time scoop every newspaper in the country by printing a close-up of Finger McGowand, we'll really get the campaign off to a fine start."

Mr. Fox muttered something excitedly under his breath, seemed to remember what he wanted to say and shouted at Willowby.

"Why didn't you tell me you had a picture of McGowand?"

Willowby shook his head.

"I didn't know I had it," he admitted feebly. "I fact, I don't even know who he is."

"Who he *was*," Mr. Blackhead corrected in sotto voice. "Finger McGowand escaped from prison last week. The police tried to trail him, but through political pull, he had every picture of himself destroyed. There weren't more than half a dozen people who could describe him.

"The newspapers want pictures, and are ready to pay any price for them. Evidently there isn't another one existing, with the exception of the print you have here."

Willowby sighed.

*"So many times,"* he thought, *"I've done brilliant things without knowing it."*

"I guess they can find him now," he said in a pleased voice. "I have the negative and we can make plenty of prints for the police."

Mr. Fox chuckled in a very unpleasant manner, but Mr. Blackhead was on Willowby's side.

"They don't need pictures now," he said mournfully. "McGowand was blown into a million pieces last night. Every news agency in the country will pay for the rights to reproduce this. Our advertisement will be the first to show the public what Finger McGowand looked like alive."

But Willowby wasn't listening to Mr. Blackhead's rambling.

*McGowand was blown into a thou-*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*sand pieces, and he, Willowby Jones had the only picture. Mrs. Dillwiddy had told him the visitor asked for him. She had directed McGowand to the second floor. Oscar said Homer Dillwiddy's ghost would be on the second floor.*

HE KNEW that both Mr. Fox and Mr. Blackhead were staring at him. He looked at Mr. Fox, and that gentleman had only hatred and envy in his eyes. Not so Mr. Blackhead. The insurance representative stared at Willowby as though Jones were something akin to an angel.

At that moment, Willowby Jones made a decision that had been troubling him for a long time. He turned sternly to Mr. Fox.

"I'm sorry, but I refuse to give Fox & Laird a share for this work," he said. "You've been collecting three quarters of everything I've made for a long time. I do the work and you sit in your office and gloat."

Mr. Fox's face glowed as though he had just drawn it out of a furnace door. His fists were clenched tightly and he struggled for his breath.

"Why you—you ungrateful. . ."

"Hard working office boy," Willowby interrupted stubbornly. "I've landed every big account you've got. I sewed up the Bauker Whiskey job and I'm collecting ten thousand a year from Barbarous Blond. If I took those accounts away from you, you'd have to go to work yourself."

Fox knew somehow that his bluff wasn't working as it had in the past. He knew that Jones was telling the truth. From the admiring glint in Blackhead's eyes, he guessed that Never-A-Care Insurance would donate another hundred thousand dollars to Willowby's upkeep.

Fox had a temper, but he also knew when it was useless to fight. A crafty gleam replaced the look of frustration in his eyes.

"But Willowby," he protested in a milder voice. "Where does this leave me? I'll gladly take you on as a partner. In fact, since Laird was called by the Navy, I've been thinking. . ."

"Partnership nothing," Willowby growled. He was feeling the full strength of his new triumph. "You've kicked me around long enough. I can start an agency of my own."

"But the name of Fox & Laird," Fox groaned. "Think of the prestige? You can even have my office."

Mr. Blackhead smiled approvingly from the sidelines, but Willowby wasn't satisfied.

"You're damned right I'll have your office," he said. "And when I call you, I want you to come running."

Mr. Fox shrugged.

"We'll change the name to Fox and Jones," he promised. "And now are you ready to discuss contracts, Mr. Blackhead?"

Blackhead started to speak but Willowby silenced him with a polite motion of his hand.

"There are still a few points to mention, Fox," he said smoothly.

"To begin with, the name will be Jones & Fox Advertising Agency. Secondly, you will move to my office at once and I will take over yours."

"And I," Mr. Blackhead broke in gently, "will see that you receive five checks of fifty thousand dollars each to get this first ad properly distributed. I think we should buy space in several nationally known periodicals."

If Fox had any further doubt of his plans for the future, the mention of so large an amount of money changed them abruptly. He was fairly purring by this time.

"I'm afraid, Willowby, that I have no choice. I'll move from my office and see that our lawyer makes the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

proper changes in the corporation papers next week."

*"You'll do it today,"* Willowby insisted. *"You'll do it before Mr. Blackhead signs a contract."*

Blood pressure showed warning signs once more. Mr. Fox's neck turned a delightful pink. There was one last bit of defiance left in his heart.

"I'll have the papers changed today," he promised, "but, so help me Jones, I've still got some prestige left around this office. I won't take a stick of furniture out of that office until the spirit moves me."

Willowby thought of Oscar, the friendly ghost, and his willingness to be of service at any time.

"I think," he said with a gentle smile, "that I can take care of that."

## HUMAN ELECTRICITY

By JERRY WALSH

IN 1780 Galvani made the amazing discovery that the living organism has something to do with electricity. He showed that the muscles of a dead frog will twitch when given an electric shock. Investigation in this field was held up for more than one hundred years, for the instruments then at the disposal of scientists were not delicate enough to detect the extremely minute amounts of current involved. With the development of radio new strides were taken in this particular branch of scientific research.

Professor Judson Herrick of Chicago University was one of the first men to utilize the newly developed electrocardiograph which was capable of registering less than one-millionth of a volt. His investigations led him to the discovery that there are definite amounts of electricity flowing between the various groups of cells in the brain, as well as the individual cells. Since his findings were made known, other interesting facts have come to light. For instance it has been found that the red blood cells carry charges of electricity to such an extent that if all the charges from the blood of the average man could be collected and allowed to furnish power for an electric light bulb of twenty-five watts, the bulb would burn for fully five minutes!

Tests in the laboratories have also shown that the more intelligent you are, the less current you generate while thinking. They show, too, that the voltage generated is greater when you are cold than when you are comfortably warm.

Scientists are still groping about in this very new and very fascinating realm of experimentation.

* * *

## FLIGHT AGAINST TIME

By H. R. STANTON

MANY times, so-called true mysteries have come down through so many years and through such obscure hands that they assume a legendary character, and it is almost impossible to sift out the original truth from all the romantic fiction. But here is a real life mystery, which occurred as recently as 1901, so that the participants in it are very likely to be living today.

One January morning, at nine o'clock, the two young sons of Mauro Pansini, architect of Bari, Italy, were noticed loitering in the town of Ruvo. Only a half later, they were found in the Capuchin Convent at Malfatti. The distance between the two towns was thirty miles. Though it is now possible to cover this distance in one half hour, back in 1901, such speed was impossible, and especially so for such youngsters as these.

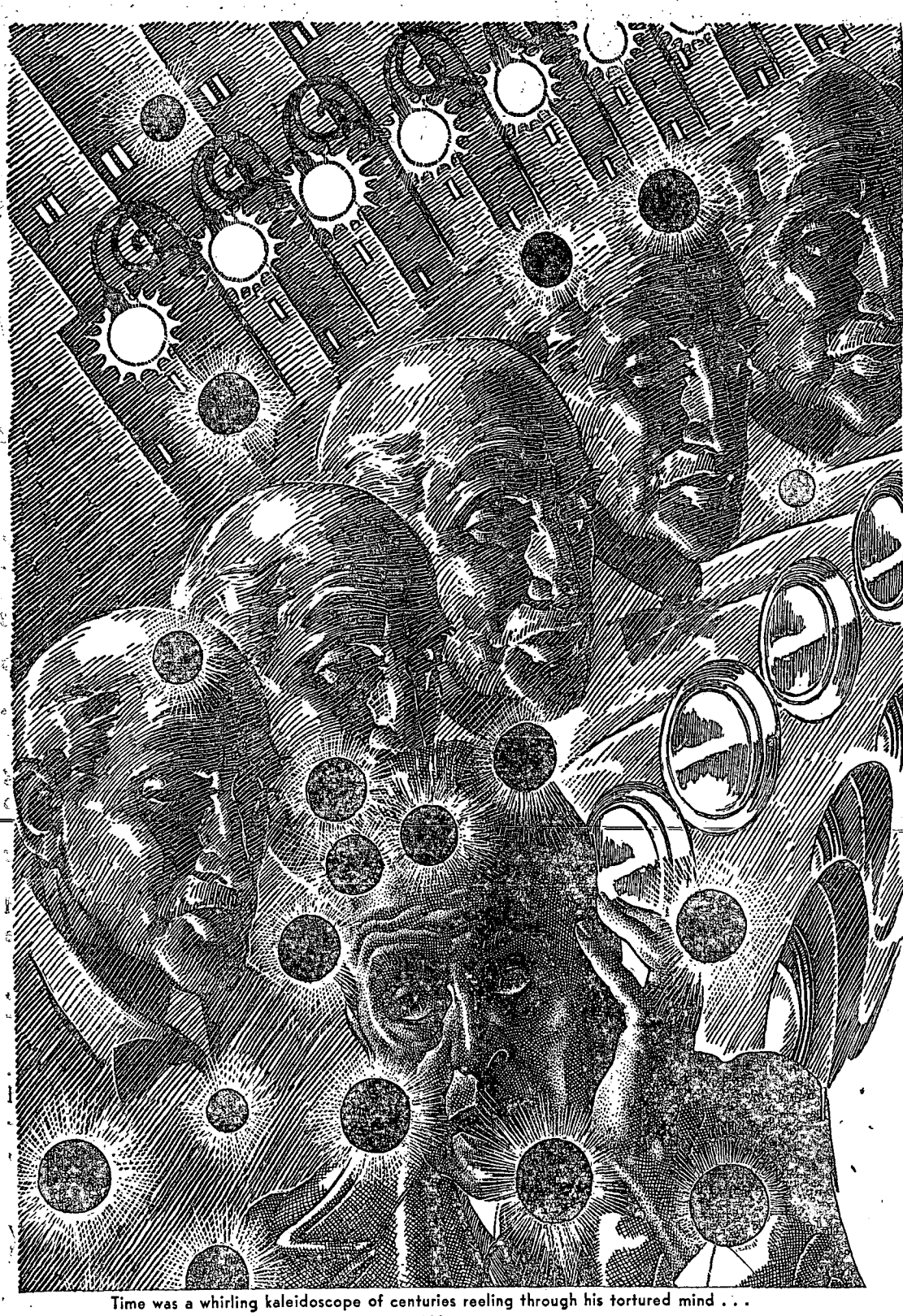
The strange happening gripped the whole town. All sorts of explanations were proposed and discarded. The peasants, beset by superstitions, declared that the boys had been caught by the evil spirits in the wind storm that had swept up at that time. The boys themselves could give no reason for their incredible behavior. It was as if that half hour had been struck from their life. They had no knowledge of what they had done with it.

The mystery was not to end there, for while feeling still ran high in the little Italian town, another bolt struck the two boys. This time, they disappeared from their home at Ruvo, and almost instantly reappeared miles away at a relative's home. Both of them were under a profound hypnotic spell.

This time, the excitement led to a systematic investigation, but the seeming miracle was never explained, for how can a body occupy two spaces at one time? It sounds incredible.

* * *

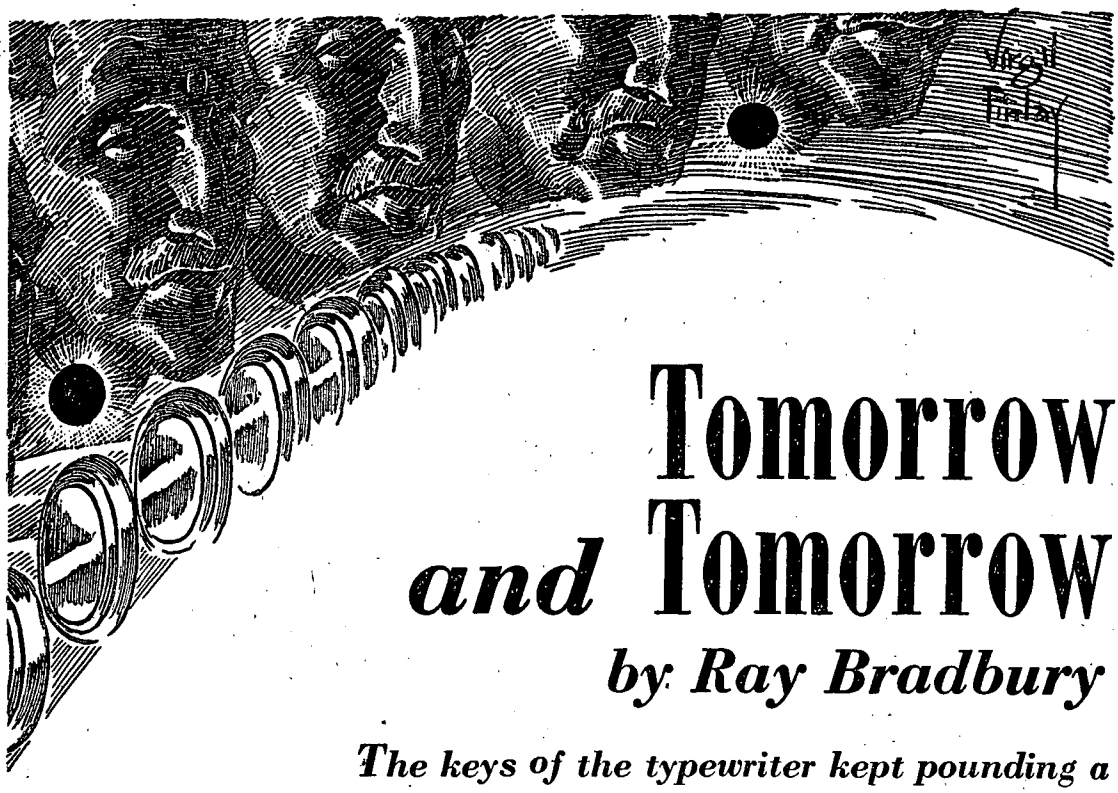
PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Time was a whirling kaleidoscope of centuries reeling through his tortured mind . . .



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED




# Tomorrow and Tomorrow

## by Ray Bradbury

***The keys of the typewriter kept pounding a message, and Steve Temple watched the words spell out—with no human hand on the machine.***

UP TO the time he opened the door, the day hadn't been any different from all the other days. Walking Los Angeles hunting for a job he couldn't find, looking in store windows at food he couldn't buy, and wondering why the habit of living got so strong you couldn't break it even after you didn't want it any longer.

It hadn't been quite so bad as long as he had his typewriter to come home to. He could thumb his nose at the world outside for a while and build new ones—bright shiny worlds where he was a very glamorous guy indeed and never went hungry. He could kid himself, even, that some day he might be a writer, rolling in money and adoration.

He'd rather have parted with his right leg than his typewriter. But none of the Uncle Bennies were paying money for right legs, and a guy has to eat and pay his rent.

"Oh yeah?" he snarled at the door panel. "Name two reasons why?"

He couldn't name one. He unlocked it, closed it behind him, turned on the lights, and started to take off his hat.

He didn't. He forgot he had a hat, or a head under it. He just stood, staring.

There was a typewriter on the floor.

It was his room, all right. Cracked ceiling, dingy paper, blue-striped pajamas trailing off an unmade wall bed, the memory of this morning's coffee.

It was not his typewriter.

There was no possible way for any typewriter to get there. That was bad enough, like finding a camel in the bath-



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tub. But even at that, an ordinary camel you could take. It was the green ones with wings that really bothered you.

The typewriter was like that. It was big, and made of something that looked like polished silver, and it shimmered like a fish under water. It was so streamlined that it flowed into itself with an eerie feeling of motion. There was a sheet of fine crisp paper in the roller, and a lot of unfamiliar crimson keys on the board.

He stood staring at it; a man like the room he slept in, no particular size, shape, color, or age. Just a greyish blob of humanity with tired eyes behind thick lenses and a face with nothing in it but defeat. John Doe through the ages, the eternal zero without which multiplication can't exist.

He closed his eyes, shook his head, and looked again. It was still there. He said aloud:

"I have not been drinking. My name is Steve Temple. I live at 221 East 9th Street, and I owe three weeks rent. I have not had any dinner."

His voice sounded all right. It made sense.

THE typewriter didn't, but it stayed there just the same.

He took a deep breath and walked around it, carefully. It had four sides. It looked solid, except for the shimmer. It squatted calmly on the dingy rug and let its beautiful streamlining flow around on itself, looking as though it had grown there with the building.

He realized that he was sweating, very hard. That made him mad. It was his last clean shirt, and he owed the laundry.

"All right," he said to the typewriter. "You're here. And you're scaring hell out of me, if it makes you any happier. Now what?"

He bent over it, slowly, not liking it. Not liking it at all. Wanting to touch it because it was so beautiful, and cold clear down to his heels for the same reason. . . .

It began to type, all by itself in the middle of the floor.

He didn't move. He couldn't. He crouched, frozen, watching the bright keys flash and strike with nobody touching them.

*"Calling the past! Calling the past! Calling the past! . . . !"*

It was like water hitting an oiled window and running off, not leaving a mark. He heard a chime ringing softly and he saw the words. No wires—no operator—but it worked. Wireless. A radio-controlled typewriter.

He picked it up like it was scalding him and set it on the table.

"Calling the past! Calling the past! Press down on stud marked SENDING and type reply. Press down on stud marked Sending—"

Steve felt something move. It was his hand, all by itself. *Press the stud.* He pressed.

The machine stopped and waited.

Silence. There was too much of it, too suddenly. Temple felt the blood rise in his cheeks, burn his ears. It was so very quiet that he finally had to make noise.

So he typed:

"Every good boy does fine. Every good boy does fine. Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their country—"

Slamming, the typewriter jumped as if hit by fists. The chime jangled. Control jerked away from Temple.

"Hello!" the machine exclaimed. "You're alive there, then. I was afraid I'd reach past the era of typewriters. . . . Hitler didn't kill you, then—you're fortunate!"

"Hell, no," Temple retorted, loud.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Hitler's been dead ten years!" Then, realizing that speaking was impractical, he said on paper: "This is 1955. Hitler's dead," and then he stared at his fingers, kicking himself, wondering what had made him put it down.

Typewriter keys gleamed, moving. "Who are you, quick! Where are you located?"

Temple replied, "May I ask the same question? Is this a gag?" He snapped his fingers, inhaled hard. "Harry—is that you, Harry? It must be! Haven't heard from you since '47—you and your practical jokes!"

The RECEIVING stud clicked coldly. The SENDING stud spunged up.

"Sorry. Not Harry. Name is Ellen Abbott. Female. 26 years old. Year 2442. Five feet ten inches tall. Blonde hair, blue eyes—semantician and dimentional research expert. Sorry. Not Harry."

Steve Temple tried to blink the words away. It didn't work.

THE machine shuddered. Keys, carriage, platinum and scarlet keys dissolved as if showered in some instant-acid. It wasn't there any more. It was gone. And a moment later it slipped back, shining and hard under his hands. It came back bursting out its message quick and dark:

"I've got to get this over to you in a hurry, and yet to do it correctly it should take a long period of carefully worded propaganda. But there isn't time. Idle talk in a dictatorship like Kraken's, is fatal. I'll give you the simple, down to the bone facts. First, though, explain your background, the exact date and other associative details. I *must* know. If you can't help me, I'll withdraw the machine, refocus it in another era. Please reply—"

Steve wiped sweat off his face. "Name, Steve Temple. Profession—writer. Age 29, feel like a hundred. Date: Monday evening, January 10th, in the year 1955. I must be crazy."

Crazy or not, the typewriter made words:

"Good. I've focussed on the hairline of the Crisis! There's a lot to be done before January 14th, Friday of your year. My sand's running out. Hold on. The Guard is coming, escorting Kraken. They're taking me from this cell to Trial. I think they'll give the verdict tonight. So—tomorrow night: same time, I'll push contact with you again. I don't dare withdraw the machine. Chances of refocussing it to you are bad—Stand by—"

That was all.

The machine just sat there, shining white and saying nothing. Temple touched the keys. They were frozen hard.

He stood up, his eyes spread, and put his last cigarette in his mouth, forgetting to light it. Then he looked around for his hat, found it on his head, and locked himself out of the room quick.

He walked in the park. That was nothing new, walking in the park, but it helped; looking at stars, people and boats on the water. He walked until he got drunk-tired and he wasn't scared any more. Then he went back.

Without turning on the lights, he undressed and went to bed. An old trick. That way you imagined you were stopping over for a night at the Biltmore.

But there was no getting away from that odor of ancient cabbage. The Biltmore, he told himself, was getting run down.

Suddenly he switched on the lights. Looking across the room dazedly, minus his glasses, he saw the typewriter.

He turned the lights out again, pulled the covers way up over his ears.

"Sorry. Not Harry. Name is Ellen

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Abbott. Year 2442. Sorry. Not Harry."

He shivered.

SOMEBODY had kicked him in the head, for no reason. At least that's how it felt when he woke up the next morning. The room had a disturbed, electric feel to it, as if some one had drifted in, hovered over him, and vanished instantly just before his eyes opened.

The door was locked on the inside.

Bed-springs whined when he shifted weight to drop long legs over the edge. Standing, he put on his glasses.

He saw the typewriter. He sat down again, very slowly.

Stubborn dream, that. It persisted in being real. Yet he had completely forgotten it during sleep, and he didn't know why he should forget something so dramatically shoved into his life.

Dressing, tidying up the room, he pretended to be interested in everything but the machine. It was a poor job of acting. Stalling as long as he dared, he exited reluctantly to hunt jobs. Pausing outside the door, he listened. Not a sound but his own breathing in his mouth. Then he remembered. Tonight. Ellen Abbott had said it. Tonight. Same time.

He walked off to find work that didn't exist.

He must have walked a lot; his feet were swollen. He must have talked to dozens of people and had dozens of jobs refused him, and somewhere along the line he boarded a street-car, because, that evening coming home he found an unused transfer in his hand. He found a dollar bill, too. Borrowed, he didn't know where, and he didn't care. Getting to his room fast was the main thing.

It was the first time he had ever rushed home to that room or any room. Funny. The apartment house door swung ahead of him. He walked up rickety steps with his head down. Halfway up, he stopped. His face came up, jerking, all white afire and alert.

There it was. A faint singing of chimes. And beating as quickly as his heart, the sounds that were the typewriter keys.

It had been years since he had tried leaping steps three at a try. He learned how to do it all over again.

Closing the door he stiffened when he saw it. Like a man deep under clear thick water he walked across the room in dreamy slow motion. Clicking off somewhere, the typewriter sounded, but it was right in front of him:

"Hello—Steve Temple . . .!"

He held himself in. Fingers twitching indecisively on the keys, he shut his jaw, hard. Then he let himself go and it was easy.

"Hello, Ellen," he wrote. "HELLO, ELLEN!"

In the first few quiet moments after contact was sealed, Temple reluctantly sketched in his life for her. Cramped, grey years dragging on like men slogging it out in a chain-gang. Nights of looking at a door, waiting for a knock, for someone to come in and be his friend. And nobody ever there but the landlord whining about his rent. His only friends lived between book-covers: a few of them had grown out of his typewriter before it was pawned. That was all.

Then Ellen Abbott spoke:

"If you're going to help me, and you are the only one I depend on now to mould the future, Steve Temple, you deserve a complete explanation. My father was Professor Abbott. You've heard of him, of course. No, how blind of me. How would you know him; you've been dead five hundred years—"

Steve swallowed nervously. "I feel

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quite alive, thanks. Continue."

Ellen Abbott went on:

"It's a paradox. I'm unborn to you, and therefore unbelievable. And you're dead and buried five centuries ago, and yet the whole future of the world revolves about we two impossibilities, and especially about you if you agree to act in our behalf.

"Steve Temple, you will have to believe what I say. I can't expect instantaneously blind obedience, but there are only three days more for you to decide and act and if you refuse at the last moment, all my talking will be for nothing when I could have been pleading with someone else in your age. I must convince you of my utter sincerity. There's a job for you to do—"

Temple saw the next words and everything got dark and uneven inside himself. The small room got cold, and Steve didn't move, he sat and stared at the words as they appeared:

"You have a job to do for me—no, not for me, but for all of us in the future."

THE next thing that came into focus was a cup of coffee in his right hand. Contracting his throat muscles, coffee scalded his stomach. The Greek was there. You could smell him, fat and greasy behind his beanery counter. Something white flashed: the Greek's teeth.

"Hello, Greek." Temple's lips barely moved. "How did I get here?"

"You walked in, just like you done every night last three years. You oughta take it easy. You look like a ghost. What's up?"

"Same thing. Is it foggy tonight?"

"Don't *you* know?"

"Me?" Steve chafed hands that were rimed with cool moisture. "Oh, yeah. *Sure*. Sure, it's foggy. I forgot." He drew a trembling breath, and it felt like the first one he had had in hours. "Funny thing, Greek—five hundred years from now they'll do away with fog . . ."

"Chamber of Commerce pass a law?"

"Weather control," said Steve. Control. He thought the word over and over again, and added. "Yeah. All kinds of control. A dictatorship, maybe."

"You think so?" Pursing his brows, the Greek leaned heavy on the counter. "You think, the way things work now, we get into one?"

"Five hundred years from now," said Steve.

"Hell. Who cares? Five hundred years!"

"Who cares? Maybe I do, Greek. I don't know yet." Steve stirred his coffee for a while. "Look, Greek, if you'd known Hitler for what he'd be forty years ago, and you'd had the chance, would you have killed him?"

"Sure! Who wouldn't? Look what a mess he made?"

"Think. Think about all the guys who grew up with Hitler, though. Some one of them must have guessed what he'd be. Did THEY do anything about it? No."

The Greek shrugged heavily.

Temple slumped over his coffee for a moment. "How about me, Greek? Would you kill me, knowing I'd be tomorrow's tyrant?"

The Greek made laughter. "*You*—another Hitler?"

Temple smiled twistedly. "See! You don't believe I could endanger the world. That's how Hitler got away with it. Because he was a little guy long before he was a big guy, and nobody pays any attention to the little guys."

"Hitler was *different*."

"Was he?" Steve tightened up. "A paperhanger? Different? That's funny.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nobody recognizes a murderer until it's too late."

"Okay. Suppose I bump you off," offered the Greek. "So, how do I prove you're the next dictator. You're dead, so you're no dictator. It don't work out. They toss me in the clink."

"That's the whole thing." Temple was looking at a picture hung on the wall. A campaign advertisement of a healthy, pink faced man with crisp white hair and eyes that were blue and open. Under the picture was a label: J. H. McCracken for Congress, 13th District.

THINGS got black. Trembling violently, Temple rose from his seat, looked about wildly, passed his hands in front of his eyes and yelled it: "Greek! What's the date? Quick! I forget! I keep forgetting important things!"

It sounded as if the Greek was in an echo-chamber. "Five o'clock in the morning. January 11th. Ten cents, please."

"Oh, yeah. Yeah." Steve stood there, swaying, and still staring at that picture. The one of J. H. McCracken, electee to Congress. "I've still got time, then. Three days before they kill Ellen——"

The Greek said, "Huh?" and Steve said, "Nothing," and he laid out two nickels on the counter. A moment later he faced the door of the beanery, opening it, and somewhere back a million miles the Greek was talking, "You going so soon?" and Steve replied, "I guess so." And then he said, "Greek . . ?"

"Yeah?"

"Ever have a million nightmares and wake up afraid and wound tight in the dark, and then go back to sleep and have one of those dreams that are high and swift and beautiful and shine like stars? It's good, Greek. It's a change. You forget all the nightmares for a while. You wake up alive for the first days in years. That's what happened to me, Greek . . ."

The door opened under his hand, the fog came in cold and salty against the warm food-smell. He thought about things and got scared he would forget things—Ellen and the machine and the future. He must NOT forget. Ever. There, on the wall, hung J. H. McCracken's picture. Now, take the M and the c off the last name and spell what's left with a K. The guy looked decent. He looked like he loved his wife and kids.

Like it or not, it was a fact. J. H. McCracken was one of the men he had to kill! He had to remember that.

He remembered something else. The first, the unconsciously ironic words that he had typed the night before on the machine:

"Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of——"

The future! Steve Temple walked outside and shut the door in the Greek's puzzled face. Just like that.

The fog went away after awhile, taking the darkness with it, and pretty soon it was high noon.

Threading into the open rolling green of Griffith hills a bus carried Steve Temple to the warm open fresh places described in the vivid tongue of Ellen Abbott.

He walked alone. Up ahead, where the years mellowed down into a haze with distance, there would be people here, moving and speaking and living in the palatial structure of a Dictator. Buildings would soar up like silver spears hurled and frozen. There would be music, coming soft and sweet from the hidden radio-sources in trees and on hills and in coves. And across the sky airships would drift like flecks of dream-stuff.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Most of all, five hundred years from now—Temple climbed a high hill and stood looking at the calm quiet, closing his eyes—on this exact spot a woman named Abbott would be held in the uppermost tier of a crystalline palace. Crimson keys would whisper under her fingers and her message would vibrate through five centuries—to him.

THE future was so real, he put out a hand, almost touching it. Wind rattled typewriter paper in his grasp, a scroll of dialogue twisted from the machine during the midnight hours.

In the midst of that future's bright fabric, the black liquid threat of Kraken spread, staining. Kraken, who was the fourth of a dynasty, the pallid, soft-faced man who held the world in two fists and wouldn't let it go.

Steve rubbed his jaw. Here he was hating a guy he would never meet.

He could only meet him indirectly. Hell. It was a fantastic sort of thing. Waging a war against a man, fighting across all those years. Who'd have thought a little guy like him would ever be given the chance to play hero to the world?

Ellen said a lot on paper. Steve read it over:

"Father and I sweated on the dimensional method as the only force powerful enough to uproot Kraken's rigid foundation. Tracing history back to its most probable point, the Crisis where it would be easiest for the elimination of his ancestors, was our job. Kraken passed laws forbidding Time-research, fearing it for what it was. He found out what my father was doing. On the day of my father's murder, I was captured and held. But the work was already done. I brought my 'typewriter' with me to the cell, supposedly to write my last day 'memoirs.'"

Here, Steve had interjected: "Why a typewriter?" and she gave the answer:

"Father wanted to go back to The Crisis and be sure the assassinations were done correctly. Guinea pig experiments resulted—well—rather unpleasantly. Some guinea pigs came back inside out. We don't know why. They just did. Not all of them; some came back incomplete, minus heads, lacking bodies, and some never returned. We couldn't risk my Father on the job. Time 'travel' was impossible. Someone in the Past had to undertake the job, unquestioningly, without pay——"

"A guy by the name of Temple?"

"Yes. If he can, and if he will and if he is fully convinced that the future depends on it. Are you convinced, Steve?"

"I don't know. I think I am, but—"

"We tried radio, Steve. Speaking directly, how much easier it would be convincing you. But the fourth dimension destroys radio waves. That was eliminated. Metal is more stolid than flesh or radio-wave, and out of that fact the typewriter came, strong, hard and welded of special alloys; the very last method we could use, the very best, and we've finally pushed through to you and time is shorter for all of us——"

Steve knew the rest of it by heart. This machine was a dimensional remanifestation of hers, self energized and compact. More about Kraken. The slaughter of innocent people, the slavery of billions. And the pages ending with:

"You can make the dead to walk, Steve. You can resurrect my father, kill Kraken and free me from prison. All this you can do. I must go now. Tomorrow night again . . ."

Steve looked up from the folded typed papers, looked up the sky where there should have been a tangible dic-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tator's palace and Ellen in the top of it.

Instead, he saw nothing but clouds.

"—make the dead to walk."

He hitchhiked back to his room.

MAKE the dead to walk. Yes. Slay Kraken and automatically another Probable world would become concrete. The people he would have slain would live. Ellen's father—he, too, would not be assassinated.

The worlds of probable IFS. IF he sat looking at the typewriter, not touching it, for the rest of the week, Ellen Abbott would be slain. IF he killed McCracken she would live.

There were a lot of IFS in life. A lot of things he COULD do if he so chose. He could go to New York or Chicago or Seattle. He had a choice. He could eat or starve in those cities. He had a choice. He could commit murder. Or robbery. Or kill himself. Choice. A lot of IFS. Each one leading to a different life, a different existence than the others, once chosen.

So Ellen and Kraken weren't improbable. She lived in the most Probable IF-world. She would continue living in it and be executed Friday night if he didn't stop it. IF. IF. IF.

IF he had the nerve. IF he was successful. IF someone didn't stop him. IF he lived that long. Tomorrow's world was a honey-comb of probabilities, waiting to be filled with reality, with definite, decided actions.

THAT evening Ellen and he talked about music and painting. He learned of her passionate regard for Beethoven, Debussey, Chopin, Gliere, and someone named Mourdene born in 1987. Her favorite literature was the product of Dickens, Chaucer, Christopher Morley . . .

They didn't even mention a man by the name of McCracken. Or another, named Kraken.

Through it all, Temple didn't have a body or a voice or anything but fire and warmth around him. His room was transformed with some touch, some essence of her yet unborn world. It was like sunlight pouring in through high, cathedral windows, washing away with clean light all the dingy world of 1955. You can't be lonely with sun on your face and inside you and your fingers working in unison on a machine with someone named Ellen Abbott, talking about sociology and psychology, literature, semantics and so many other important things.

"All the details must be clear, Steve. If you will believe in my world as it is and as it will become after you change it, you must know everything. I didn't expect you to learn or make up your mind immediately. That would be against every known rule of logic. I gambled on you——"

When midnight came they were still bursting back and forth with a tide of information. Fashions, religions, beliefs.

And even—love.

"Very sorry," wrote Ellen, "that there was never time for love. I was so busy so many years, running from city to city, working, encouraging father. At the time, he was my one devotion. Very sorry. If only there were time——"

"There'll be time," retorted Steve quietly. "If what you say about Probable futures is sound theory, then there'll be plenty. More than you can use. I'll see to it."

"And—if you should fail?"

He didn't want to think about it at all—not at all.

THERE was suddenly a lot of silence in the room. In the middle of it, Steve heard his heart pulsing at the base of his throat. He didn't remem-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ber writing it; his hands only moved a few times, and there it was:

"I—I'd like to see you, Ellen. *Just once.*"

More silence. The silence lasted so long that he was afraid she would never speak again. But, she did.

"You're a fine man, Steve Temple. Time changes little in the way of emotion. Look. There's a weak energy field encompassing this machine. Press your fingers down, bend near the machine and concentrate. Maybe—for an instant—our images may become *en rapport*. Press close, Steve . . ."

Steve obeyed instantly, something in his grey, blank eyes that had never been there before. Something warm. His lips went back from his teeth, tight with expectancy.

Something happened to his lungs so he couldn't breathe.

She was there.

Just a faint quavering outline at first, increasing. Sitting across from him. Across from him by five hundred years. Her hair was like the sun and her eyes were grave and blue under the glow of that hair, and her pink mouth opened mutely and formed the words, "Hello, Steve—"

Just like that.

Then the image washed out, and the room was warm as molten steel on all sides of him, and they typed a bit longer, his eyes swimming, and then it was over for that night, she was gone, he sat there looking at the place she had been, and the room very slowly got cold again.

That night he had dreams *before* he went to sleep.

HE HAD never taken anything in his life.

He stole a gun, a nice new shiny paralysis gun from a Weapon Shop on East Ninth. It took half the day to get up the nerve to do it, five minutes to do it, and the rest of the day to try and calm down and forget about doing it.

By that time it was Thursday evening and five hundred years away a woman was sitting down to write her "memoirs . . ."

They talked less of frivolous art things. They talked the hard, grim stuff that faced him in a short time. That glimpse, that one vivid materialization of her image the previous night had convinced him. Someone so cool, so soft, so right in her loveliness, someone like she was—well, he could sacrifice for her.

She put the blueprints at his fingertips with a few clean strokes of the keys. Late tomorrow afternoon, J. H. McCracken would be in his offices in North Los Angeles, preparing last moment details before planing to Washington. He must not leave the office. His son must not leave the office, either. They were to die.

"You understand everything, Steve?"

"Yes. I have the gun."

"Is there anything that's not clear?"

"Ellen—from time to time I forget things. Things waver. The first night, I slept, when I woke up I'd forgotten. In the beanery, again, I had to be reminded of the date. I don't want to forget you, Ellen. Why does it happen?"

"Oh, Steve, you still don't understand. Time is such a strange creature to you. Like a fog, shifting in light and dark winds, the future is twisted by circumstance. There are two Ellen Abbotts, and only one of them knows Steve Temple. When something occurs that threatens her chances of ever existing, naturally you forget her. Your very contact, small as it is, with Time, is enough to waver it. That's why you have flashing, momentary

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

amnesia."

He repeated it:

"I don't want to forget you. I've gone ahead, hoping that if I indirectly killed Kraken, it would insure your life, but—"

She cleared it up for him. She did such a good job of it that it was like a hard blow in the stomach—like the rough kick of a mule.

"Steve, with Kraken eradicated, automatically a new free world will be born. As before, the same people will be in it, but they'll be singing. The name Kraken will be a blank to them. And the millions he butchered will live again. In THAT world, there'll be no place for Professor Abbott and his daughter Ellen.

"I won't remember you, Steve. I will have never met you. There would be no reason, Kraken gone, for me to meet you. I'll forget we ever conversed late at night or that I ever dreamed of building a time-typewriter. And that's the way it will be, Steve, tomorrow night, when you kill J. H. McCracken."

It stunned him. "But—I thought . . ."

"I didn't fool you purposely, Steve. I thought you realized that tomorrow night would be the end, no matter what."

"I thought that some way you might get through alive to 1955 someday, or help ME to come to your time." His fingers shook.

"Oh, Steve. Steve."

He was getting sick. His throat ached, tight and hot.

"It's late, and the Guard is coming to check. We'd better say our last goodbye now—"

"No! Please, Ellen. Wait. Tomorrow."

"It'll be too late, then, if you kill McCracken."

"I have a plan. It'll work—I know it'll work. Just so I can talk with you once more, Ellen. Just one more time."

"All right. I know it's impossible, but—tomorrow night. Good luck. Good luck and good night."

The machine stopped moving.

It hit him hard, the silence. He sat there, weaving dazedly in the chair, laughing a little at himself.

Well—he could always go back to walking in the fog. There was always a lot of fog. It walked beside you, behind you, ahead of you, and it never spoke. It touched you once in awhile on the face as if it understood. That was all. He'd walk all night, come home, undress in the dark, and turn in, praying that once he slept he would never wake up again. Never.

*"I'll forget we ever conversed late at night. I won't remember you, Steve."*

IN THE late afternoon of January 14th, Friday, Steve Temple shoved the paralysis gun inside his dirty jacket and zippered it.

No matter what action he took, Ellen Abbott would be destroyed today. An execution chamber awaited her if he didn't move fast. And if he succeeded, then, too, the Ellen he had known would vanish like smoke wisps in the wind.

He would have to kill McCracken very carefully so as to speak to Ellen again. He had to get to her once more before all of Time changed, reconsolidating itself for Eternity, to give her his final message. He thought it over. He knew exactly the words to say.

He started walking, fast.

It didn't feel like his body, it felt like somebody else's. Like getting used to a new suit, all tight and close and too warm for the weather, that's how it was. Eyes, mouth, his whole face set in one lined pattern he didn't dare break. Once he relaxed it would smash the whole thing.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He got his shoulders back where they hadn't been in years, and he made fists of hands that had long ago relaxed in despair. It was almost like getting back a hunk of self-respect, clutching a gun, knowing you were going to change the whole damned future's profile.

He had lungs again, and used them for breathing, and his heart wasn't just lying still in his chest. It yelled, wanting out. Sky clear overhead, his heels came down, smooth, swift, on concrete walks. Suddenly it was four o'clock in the afternoon. Strange buildings rose around him, numbers passing the calm scrutiny of his eyes. He kept walking, because if he stopped he'd never get his legs going again.

This was the street.

Suddenly he began to cry. It was all hidden behind the tautened lines of his face, warm and bitter, his brain lurching against dim skull-walls, his throat retching down to where the heart slammed upon it. Warm water got half out of his eyes before he stopped it. A wind blew far away, whining, but it was a very calm day and there was no wind. Nothing must happen now to stop him, he thought. Nothing. He turned in at an alley, walked back to a side-door, opened it, went in.

He climbed a back-stairs flight where the sun, his feet scraping softly and his heart-beat were the only tangibles in a crazy nightmare. He met nobody. He wished he would meet someone, someone who would say it was only play-acting, that he could toss the gun away, wake up. Nobody stopped him. Nobody said that to him. It was four long flights of sunlit stairs.

Inside his head, his brain ran around trying to put on the brakes, but there were none. He had to do it. You can't let the same thing happen all over again, like Hitler. Hitler growing up. Nobody laying a hand on him, or pumping his vile body full of lead. McCracken. The guy he was going to kill looked innocent. Everybody said how swell a guy he was. Yeah. But how about his sons, and THEIR sons?

Ellen. Moving his lips. Ellen. His heart moved. Ellen. Moving his feet. And there was the door. Silver-lettered across it:

J. H. McCracken, U. S. Congressional Rep.

PALE and quiet, Steve opened the door and stood looking at a young man who sat behind a bleached walnut desk. A green metal triangle said: William McCracken. The Representative's son.

One glimpse of a square, surprised face, mouth widened to the teeth, hands coming up to fend off the inevitable.

A pressure of a finger. The gun in Steve's hand kept purring contentedly like a sleepy cat. He snapped it off, quick. All of it had taken an instant. One breath. One heart-beat. It was very easy and very hard to kill a man. He readjusted a stud on the paralyzing-tube.

From the next office, quietly: "Oh, Will, step in a moment, son. I want to check those Washington plane tickets again."

Sometimes it's hard to open a door, even an unlocked one.

That voice. J. H. McCracken, newly elected people's man.

Tighter and quieter, Steve opened the second door and this time McCracken was closer when he said, "Did you get them all right, son? No slip-ups?"

Steve looked at McCracken's broad back and said, "No slip-ups," so that McCracken heard. He swiveled in his chair, came around, holding a lit cigar in one hand, fountain pen in the other.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

His eyes were blue and didn't see the gun. "Oh, hello," he said, smiling. Then he saw the gun and the smile went away inside him.

Steve said, "You don't know me. You don't know why you're being killed because you always leaned over backward to be clean. You never cheated at marbles. Neither did I. That doesn't mean someone else might not cheat five hundred years from now. Time's verdict says you're guilty. It's too bad you don't look like a crook, it would make it easier . . ."

McCracken opened his mouth, thinking he could talk out of it.

THE gun sang it's little song. There was no more talk. Steve sweated. Not too much power. Just enough to weaken the cardiac nerves. Walking in close, Steve kept the weapon singing half-power. Snapping it off, he bent, inserted fingers in the grey vest. The heart was still there, weak. Fading.

He said something funny to the body: "Don't die yet. Do me a favor —keep alive until I talk to Ellen again . . ."

Then he shuddered so violently it was enough to rip the flesh from his bones. Sick, teeth chattering, his eyes blurred, he dropped the gun, picked it up and began worrying. It was a long way to his room, to the typewriter and Ellen.

He had to make it, though. Somehow he'd cheat the future. He'd think of some way to keep Ellen for himself. Some way.

He got hold of his fear, held it in one place, kept it there. Opening the door, he came face to face with McCracken's bewildered, office staff. Three women, two men coming to say their goodbyes, frozen in shocked attitudes over the son's body.

Temple slammed the door, ran to a window, opened it, climbed out onto a fire-escape, shut it, started down. Someone flung up the window behind him, yelled. Someone opened it and came down after him. Their feet made an iron clangor on the metal ladders.

Leaping to the alleyway, Steve fled for the corner, yanked open the door of the first cab he found, flopped in, shouting directions. Two of McCracken's men rounded the alley-corner, shouting. The cab slid away from the curb, smooth and quick. The cabbie hadn't heard a thing.

Temple fell back in the seat, mouth full of saliva he couldn't swallow, so he spat it out. He didn't feel like a book-hero. He only felt cold scared and small, crouching there. He had changed the future. Nobody knew it but himself and Ellen Abbott.

*And she would forget.*

"Wait, Ellen. Wait for me, please."

So this is what it's like to save a world. To have frozen insides and hot tears on your face and hands that shake violently if you quit grasping your knees. ELLEN!

The cab hurled itself to a stop in front of his hotel. He staggered out, saying wild, silly things to nobody. He heard the cabbie yell, but he ran ahead, anyway. He got inside, ran upstairs.

He unlocked his door and then stood there, afraid to open it. Afraid to look inside his room. The cabbie was coming up the steps behind him, cursing. What if everything was too late . . ?

Sucking his breath in, Steve opened the door.

It was there! The typewriter was still there!

Steve slammed the door, locked it, and then in one insane stumbling movement he was across the room to the machine, yelling and typing simultaneously.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Ellen! Ellen Abbott! Ellen, I did it. It's all over. Are you still there?"

A PAUSE. Looking at the blank, horribly blank paper, his blood pounding through his veins until they ached. It seemed centuries before the typewriter keys moved and then it said:

"Oh, Steve, you succeeded. You did it for us. And I hardly know what to say. There's no reward for you. I can't even help you, and I wish I could. Things are changing already, getting misty and melting like waxen figures, flowing away in the Time Stream . . ."

"Hold on a while longer, Ellen. Please!"

"Before, we had all of Time, Steve. Now, I can't hold reforming matter and moments. It's like snatching at stars!"

Down below, in a sunlit street, a car braked to a stop. Voices broke out of the car, a metal door rapped home. McCracken's men, coming to find Steve Temple. Maybe, with guns—

"Ellen! One last thing. Here, in my time, one of your ancestors must have lived—somewhere! Where, Ellen?"

"Don't hurt yourself, Steve. Don't you understand. It's no use!"

"Please. Tell me. Some one I could speak to, someone I could see. Tell me. Where?"

"Cincinnati. Her name is Helen Anson. But—"

Heavy footsteps pounding in the hotel hall, muffled voices.

"The address is 6987 C Street . . ."

Then—the time was up. Across the city, McCracken lay pulsing out his last life. And here the every beat of his fading heart acted upon Ellen and Steve Temple.

"Steve. Steve, I—"

Then he gave her his last message. The thing he had wanted to say for a long time, from inside him. The door was being beaten by fists and shoulders as he said it, but he said it anyhow, in the desperation of the last seconds:

"Ellen. Ellen, I love you. Hear me, Ellen! I love you! Don't go away now. Don't!"

He kept typing it over and over and over again, and he was crying like a kid and his throat couldn't say it all, and he kept typing it over and over . . .

. . . until the keys misted, dissolved, melted and flowed away under his fingers, and he kept typing it until all the hard, bright wonder of the machine was gone and his hands fell through empty air to rap upon the top of an empty table.

And when they broke the door open, even then he didn't stop crying. . . .

THE END

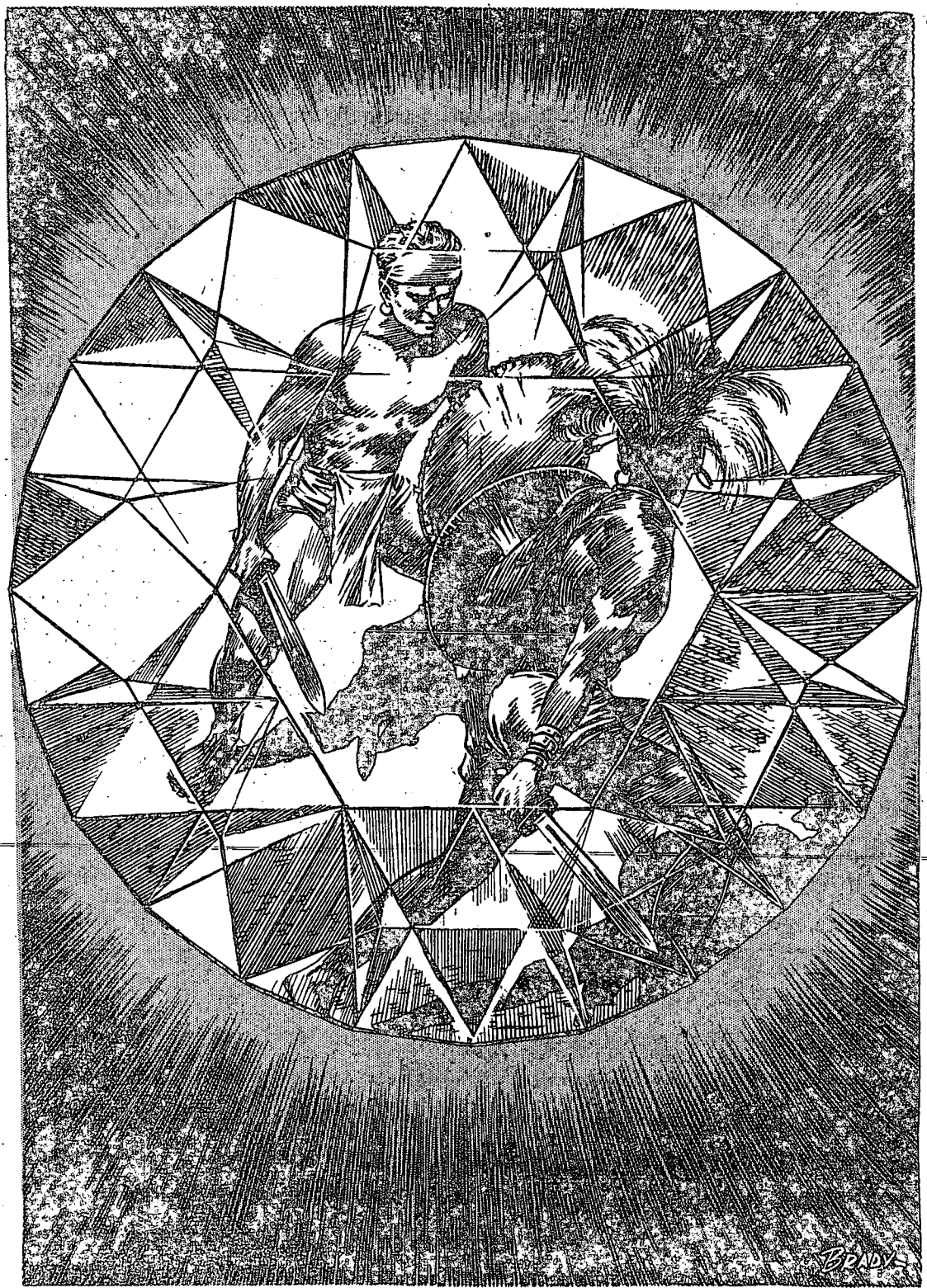
## THE PIRATE BARBAROSSA

By JUNE LURIE

BACK in the sixteenth century the name of Horuk Barbarossa was one to strike terror to the hearts of honest seafarers. He was the founder of a pirate empire, which came to be a major menace to shipping in the Mediterranean. His powerful physique and flaming red hair and beard made him outstanding in appearance. A determined and valorous leader, he defied the world, and swaggered with pride as his fleet looted rich prizes to add to his wealth and prestige. In those days a ship at sea was isolated from all the rest of the world, and these clever robbers felt fairly secure from punishment.

Finally, however, the King of Spain determined to end the menace. He sent an army of ten thousand men in a vast fleet of ships. Barbarossa heard that they were coming after him, and he and his horde of men fled for Algiers, loaded down with treasure. The Spanish army pursued them and caught up with them, and a terrific battle took place. The Spaniards were experienced soldiers and outnumbered the pirates; the battle was one-sided, and quickly over. Red-bearded Barbarossa fought with great dexterity and skill to the end, though he knew it was hopeless. He was the last survivor but twenty spears ended his life.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Pale light shimmered in the lens and then a strange scene became visible to the eye . . .



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# The EMPEROR'S EYE

## by LEROY YERXA

**It was called the Eye Of Magic by the Old Ones—this strange bit of ruby glass. And if you looked into it too long you—**

I HAVE hesitated for many weeks, to record these words. Now I am forced to do so. Why am I forced to give to the world, a story that is mine, and mine alone? Why must I go against my will and pass on to you something that I prefer to remain locked within myself?

If your name was Ron Crawford, and you entered an old antique shop on June twentieth, to come out some three months later, would your friends ask questions? If you entered sound of body and mind, to come out with your back and waist lashed with bloody whip marks, would people demand an explanation? I think so.

Well, my name *is* Ron Crawford, and I believe that the time has come when I can keep my secret no longer. A few of my personal friends demand an explanation, and they deserve one.

I recall the day clearly, for the morning was spent in the preparation of a special Sunday feature article about that infamous God of Carthage, the thing that swallowed living persons in a stomach of fire and gorged upon burnt flesh, blood-encrusted Baal-Molach.

I explain my calling briefly by saying that I am and was employed at the Central Museum of Ancient History, as librarian. I have a fair knack with words, and do an occasional piece for special newspaper supplements.

Back to the facts. On June twentieth I left the museum at nine in the morning, carrying the Manuscript—"Baal-Moloch, Fire God of Hell"—tucked under my arm. It was worth, I hoped, about fifty dollars to me. I treated it accordingly. Once it was in the hands of the editor of the Central Times, I took a bus across town, planning to visit some old friends.

I dropped off the bus at Kenmoor Avenue, a dingy little street on which a small group of people catered to the public's love for the ancient. It was a warm, sunny afternoon by now, and I moved slowly, looking into several windows containing antiques.

Half way down the block I stopped short. I was staring through a fly-specked window at an odd collection of odds and ends from all ages. What had caught my eye? That's the uncanny part of it. I had no idea. I have a habit of *seeing* something before my eyes actually focus upon it. Something of unusual interest had stopped me in my tracks, yet I wasn't sure of the specific item.

I stood there with hands clasped behind my back, legs apart at a comfortable angle, and looked at the bits of flotsam left here from other ages.



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There were a dozen ancient musical instruments, an old typewriter, a broken chair, and a battered, felt-lined case containing some rings and bits of colored glass.

I sucked in my breath sharply.

Close to the glass, and in a position where I failed to place it clearly in my mind at first, was the oddest bit of glass I had ever seen. Even through the dirty window, the sun caused it to glow like a thing alive. It had the quality and color of a ruby, but much larger than any I have ever seen. It couldn't be a ruby, for it was shaped more like a lens. Like the lens, let me explain, of a pair of rose-colored glasses.

My own thoughts caused me certain amusement. How often had I heard the term, "through rose-colored glasses"? This then, was my own private dream, and *I* decided then and there to look through my personal rose-colored glass.

I was impatient to enter the shop, and to stare through the lens. It almost seemed at that moment as though magic was in the glass. As though I would find a better, more exciting world beyond that bit of glass.

"Bosh," I said aloud, and the sound of my own voice startled me. I pushed on the door and entered. A set of chimes announced my coming. I smelled the dusty, age-old odor of the place, and stood there, looking over everything in sight. The counter was covered by all sorts of junk. Musical instruments, knives, watches, all hung from the wall.

A short, rotund old man came hobbling from the rear of the store. He wore a once-white shirt, partly covered by a buttonless vest. His eyes were hidden behind a green eye shade. He rubbed his hands together violently, as though to gain certain warmth from the movement.

"There is something you would like?"

It was both a question and a promise. I made the error of glancing toward the window. At once he pounced upon the first object in view and came back with a hunting knife.

"Fine blade," he said with great enthusiasm. "Very good for hunting."

I shook my head, and it made him appear very sad. He replaced the knife and started to tug on an old violin case.

"Moosic is a wonderful gift."

"Not for me," I said.

He hunched his shoulders and rubbed his hands once more, as though not ready to give up.

"Then—you saw something in the window?"

I MOVED closer to the case of odd jewelry and pointed to the ruby-like lens.

"May I look at that, please?"

His grin broadened.

"You can *look*," he assured me. "I don't know what it is, but look!"

It took a lot of puffing on his part to reach the lens. He placed it carefully in my palm. My fingers touched the outer rim of the lens, and a strange, tingling excitement filled me. I've never had any object exercise so great a power over my nerves and blood stream. It was like a thing alive. Like a ruby eye staring up at me. Here was something that meant much to me, and yet I could not guess what, or how.

"Odds and ends," the little man was mumbling half to himself. "A lady comes in with a hand full of odds and ends. There's some gold. Maybe a good stone. I take the lot. That's in the bottom of the box. What is it?"

He didn't expect an answer. He was speaking a riddle, for which he knew there was no answer.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Only half hearing him, I polished the lens on my coat lapel, I felt a little foolish, standing there with that bit of worthless glass in my hand.

How could I tell him I wanted to look through it—at a rose-colored world? It was an insane idea. Still, I told myself, if you have a whim, satisfy it.

"I'll give you two-bits for it," I said.

He didn't hesitate.

"I made a good investment on the other stuff," he explained. "Two-bits from you is clear profit."

I passed him the coin, half expected him to bite it to make sure of its worth, and watched him slip it into his vest pocket.

We stood there, staring at each other. I said:

"Thanks. I guess that's all."

"Don't mention it. The pleasure is all mine."

I turned my back to him. I took three steps toward the door, could contain my curiosity no longer, and lifted the ruby lens to my right eye.

So many things can take place in a second. So many things, mentally and physically. At once I realized that by closing my left eye and looking through the lens with my right, I could see exactly nothing. Then, when disappointment flooded over me, I *did* see something.

Something so incredibly horrible that I tried to take my eye away, and could not. My arm seemed frozen rigid, my fingers would not loosen themselves from the ruby lens. I was paralyzed.

I tried to speak—to cry out, but no sound came from my lips.

Slowly, ever so slowly, the glass seemed to grow to a sea of scarlet. It was as though I had been tossed into a vest ocean of blood. The ugly stuff was flowing about me, first in drops, then in filthy pools.

With every muscle, every bit of strength I possessed, I tried to force myself to drop that lens. I could not.

Very slowly, I was lifted until I was well above the floor. My body remained rigid, and I whirled in a maddening circle. I whirled, faster and faster, end over end through nothingness.

As I twisted about, I knew I was no longer in the shop. I was not in a familiar world. I twisted and gyrated directly into that world of dripping, flowing red.

I could shout once more, but my voice could summon no one.

The pressure upon my body became almost unbearable. I was hot and cold in spells. I stared through the lens intently. I could see only the ghastly sea ahead of me.

GRADUALLY the twisting motion stopped. I moved slowly out of the orbit I had been locked within. My body righted itself and I stood on something solid. The blood pool wavered and formed itself into thousands of designs. I remember having one insane thought.

"If Disney could create colors like this, he could frighten the entire world with one movie."

The designs were beginning to make sense. I was aware of a picture ahead of me. A picture in red. I was free to move. I could remove the glass from my eye.

I stood in the center of a small room, but it was a room I recognized as having been gone for these many centuries. I was present inside the apartment of a Roman noblewoman. I knew this, for I have studied such things for many years. I was as much at home as I would have been had I actually lived here myself. Although the ruby lens allowed me to examine the room, I was still facing that dull, maddening red.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I had been drawn swiftly through Hell itself, and dropped here in this place.

Slowly, for I was badly frightened, I removed the lens from my eye. The dream room did not fade. I did not fall back into my own groove of life. Instead, the room remained, and with me in it. Only the colors changed and became normal.

I wasn't sure from the first, just what sort of a dream I had invaded. Remember at that time, I was re-living the past for the first time. Now, as I write, details seem a bit less startling. It's hard to combine my present reactions with those I first felt, upon finding myself in the room of the noblewoman, Agrippina. But wait, for I am ahead of my story.

The room was low ceilinged, rather spacious, and the floor was inlaid with thousands of colored tile.

The walls were decorated lavishly. Pictures wrought of bronze and gold were everywhere. The couch, a huge thing, was covered with brilliant fabrics. Chairs were covered with hand-carved pictures of ivory and tortoise shell. Bronze braziers stood in the corners of the room, burning brightly, warming the place to perfect comfort.

I stood transfixed, my mind absorbing each detail slowly. I tried to probe and solve the problem, but I could not. This was no dream, for as I moved about, I touched certain objects and found them real. My knees, still weak, struck a heavy chair and I felt pain.

I was sure of this much. Whether a clever theatrical trick, or reality, the room was honestly constructed. Was I going mad from some hoax? But who would go to the trouble of hypnotizing and placing *me* in these surroundings? I would be presumptious to believe that I was important enough to bother with.

Was I, by the magic of the ruby lens, actually transported here into a word of the past which I had studied so carefully?

A high-pitched, tortured scream came from outside the room. That, I told myself, was no dream. It was a warning that I must act at once. I had to face the situation with my mind fully awake, until I understood what was happening. I glanced around hurriedly for an avenue of retreat. There was one door from the chamber. Light came through a single, broad window. What lay beyond? For the moment I must remain here. I must preserve some remnant of sanity. If I went out that window, would I drop into—nothing?

I was sure that the cry emerged from a woman's throat. This was confirmed by the swift, light tread outside the door. I saw the heavy pink drapes that bordered the window, and slipped hurriedly behind them. The very color of the drapes told me that this was the woman's chamber. That she sought refuge here.

The door opened swiftly. The woman came, running, panting with fear. Behind her, in hurried pursuit, came half a dozen heavily armored soldiers. Why didn't I question their dress? Why wasn't I amazed by what I saw? Remember, I had studied all this many times. I saw now, only what I had imagined for many, many years.

The woman wasn't young, and yet there was a beauty about her that whispered her loveliness as an ageless thing. She was clad in a pale blue robe that flowed about a delicately chiseled body. Her face, attractive even in terror, was carefully made up with delicately colored cosmetics. Dark tresses flowed about her face—her slender neck. She threw herself desperately upon the bed. The blue eyes, flashing wildly, mirrored horror. Her nostrils were distended.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She threw one arm up and over her face.

Already the men were closing in about her. Daggers were drawn. Short, ugly blades sought her flesh.

AT THAT instant I could see only the woman. She tossed the robe from her, revealing the delicately colored flesh, the firm smoothness of her unprotected body. Struggle as I might, I could not move to save her. Here was beauty, trying to save itself against the bite of steel. Every nerve in me fought against what was to happen, but I was frozen to the wall.

Slowly her hand came away from her face. Carefully manicured fingers moved down her side. I had never imagined such perfection from a Goddess. Her breathing was hard. Her entire body pulsated with the longing to live.

An assassin shouted in a guttural voice. I heard her cry out for pity, and still there was fury in her words.

"Kill me, brave soldiers. You see that I cannot protect myself. My armor is as thick as my white skin."

*"They cannot,"* I told myself. *"They cannot destroy . . ."*

A blade descended, hit the full curve of her breast and buried itself in her heart. She fell back, struggled to rise again, and another dagger buried itself beside the first. They stood over her and lashed out time after time until she was still. It was a long time before her corpse lay silent and did not writhe under their blows.

* * *

I try to express myself clearly and yet how can a man say that he watched a defenseless woman die without any attempt to protect her? Say what you will. I could not move. If you were allowed, even for an instant, to see history as it made itself long before you and I were alive on this earth, could you change one detail of that history? That, I think, will explain my point.

It was a long time after they left and before my stunned mind would function clearly again. I say a long time. Time is relative. It seemed ages, but I suppose I looked at that bloody corpse for only the matter of minutes. Through me coursed such hatred as few men undergo. Once I left my hiding place and started to move toward the mutilated, bloody thing on the bed. Her eyes were wide open, but they would never greet me as they might have, a few minutes ago. The brilliance was gone from her face. She was ashen, and the cosmetics seemed too bright—too barbaric. There should have been no color on that face.

I heard footsteps once more. I retreated hurriedly and hardly breathed in my hiding place near the wall.

A young man entered the room. He startled me, for he appeared vaguely familiar. I told myself I could not know him. This place is strange to me. I have never been here before.

He walked slowly to the bed. He seemed half frightened, half exuberant over what he saw. Behind him walked two of the assassians with sheathed swords. Their faces wore cruel smiles.

The young man was thick-set and he was clad in a rich, white flowing robe. His sandled feet carried him in a listless, flowing motion. His stomach was large for a man his age, and his face, gray and blotched by unclean living. His hair, even his face, reminded me somehow of the dead woman before him. Once, as he turned toward the window, I held my breath and saw the dull, slate colored eyes and the cruel mouth.

He stopped a few short steps from the couch and a smile touched his lips. His voice, so soft that it was caressing,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

came to me clearly.

*"I did not know that I had so beautiful a mother."*

His voice and words brought such a feeling of revulsion to me as I have never felt toward any man, living or dead. His words brought also a chord of sudden understanding—memory.

It dawned on me at that moment that I knew exactly where I was. I knew the man I stared upon. Only one man in Roman history had stared at his own mother and spoken those words over her corpse. A man born of hatred and spawned in lust. I, Ron Crawford, from 1945, was staring out upon a twice reacted scene. I knew that the time was somewhere about the year of fifty. I was watching the Emperor, Nero, gloating over his mother's death. This was a murder he had ordered by his own words.

DID I have need to rationalize my own thoughts? Was it necessary for me to say to myself, "Ron, this is impossible. You cannot actually be thrown backward into Roman history?"

Would that have made the situation any the less dangerous? I knew that, dream or no dream, any betrayal of my presence in this room would mean sudden and violent death.

Every muscle in my body ached. Blood pounded at my temples. The youth near the bed withdrew from the room without further words. His men followed him. I was alone with the corpse of the woman Aggripina, who's husband had said on the day of Nero's birth, "No good man can possibly be born from us."

And now, the child had grown up to murder his own mother.

I stood on the balcony, overlooking the city of Rome. The city of Seven Hills, born not so many years ago, and forming one of the most beautiful, most powerful capitols of earth. We were alone, the corpse of Aggripina and I. In spite of my own danger, I had covered the body tenderly with a silken cover. I had tried the door and it was secured from the outside. There was no escape, save from the balcony. How long I had remained in the room, I do not know. Not until darkness came did I dare leave the hiding place behind the drapes.

This thing I looked down upon was no product of a hypnotized mind. This was a city, bathed in the brilliance of a huge, silvery moon, and pulsing with life and sound. This was Rome, ruled in blood and hate. The city was still warm from the day's sun, and impressive with its thousands of acres of tall buildings and huge columns of marble.

Pale yellow light flowed over the streets, touching the Colosseum and the many impressive buildings within sight of my eyes. Streets were lighted with torches that flowed endlessly in every direction. The place was alive, and I remembered the accounts of thieves, murderers and scum who wandered about at night.

I had a job at hand and it could not wait. It was a task I didn't relish, for I still held to the dream that this might all break like a bubble, and release me from a hellish nightmare. That I would find myself back in the world where I rightfully belonged.

I waited for the city to sleep, but sleep it would not accept. The lights remained brilliant. I knew nothing of the time, but the moon was high and I had been here for hours. It must be close to the beginning of the morning hours.

No one had entered the apartment. I grew desperate. I had one plan. Get as far as possible away from this room of death.

The street below me was deserted

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and filthy with mud. It seemed more like an alley, running between two well lighted thoroughfares. Finally, with my teeth gritted and every nerve on edge, I slipped over the ornate balcony, grasped the metal strands with both hands, took a deep breath and let go. I flexed my knees as I dropped. I hit hard and mud splashed over me. In spite of my flexed knees the fall knocked the wind out of me and I rolled over and over, groaning with pain.

The breath came back slowly and I staggered to my feet. I was hardly ready for the shout of alarm that came as I arose.

*"A thief below the balcony of Aggripina. Capture the thief."*

Terror seized me, and I tried to run. White hot pain shot upward from my ankle. I stumbled and fell. I had sprained the ankle badly with the fall. I fought to regain my footing. Even as they closed in, I knew that this was no ordinary arrest. I saw the faces of the men who had murdered the woman in the room above. They had been waiting.

NERO'S private dogs of war were on guard. They had caught a prize they had not expected, but I assumed, of no less value. I was hauled rudely to my feet and spun around to the lantern light. I heard a brutal chuckle.

I knew that capture now meant death —torture.

Wildly I twisted about and sought to free myself, lashing out in all directions. A fist hit me in the cheek—hard. Blood tasted salty on my lips. Then my arms were pinned back until I was sure they would be torn from the sockets.

"Murder the thief," someone growled. "He demands no better treatment."

"Wait," cried another. It was a voice of authority. "The Emperor should hear of this. He is no common thief, this man. He wears strange garb. He dropped from the balcony of the Emperor's *beloved* mother. He may be a valuable prize."

I was unable to see them, for the lantern remained poised in front of my eyes.

"Saved he will be," a third voice said. "The Emperor pays well."

"But not so well that I'll be denied the pleasure of one blow."

A terrific force struck me full in the face. A searing, hot flame seemed to blank out the remainder of the world. After that, I knew no more.

How I first came to the Colosseum I do not know. I suppose I was carried here like a sack of potatoes, by the husky soldiers who captured me. When I awakened, I was locked in a cold, rock cell.

There was a single metal door with three bars worked into a small opening. This was the single entrance which allowed a small quota of foul air to enter. Many men had evidently been imprisoned here, and I suppose none of them were allowed to wash. There was a bare cot of rough boards, a flimsy robe tossed across it, and an earth bowl in the far corner. I put the robe on at once, for all my clothing had been stolen, and the little warmth I could gather from the clothing was much needed. Outside the cell, I could hear the hollow sounds of voices, and the corridor was full of mysterious echoes. I awakened with a throbbing headache. I was intensely hungry. Whether it was day or night, I didn't know.

I sat on the cot, after throwing the robe about myself, and shivered in agony. There came the occasional flash of a torch. I could make nothing of the distant voices. They were muffled

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and foreign to my ears.

I must have waited two hours, after I awakened, for my jailor to come. When he did, he was the filthiest scum of humanity I have ever seen. His robe would have passed for a dirty wiping cloth. He had no teeth, a low forehead, wild, uncombed hair and a slouching cringing way about him that put me on guard at once.

He carried a slop bowl full of greasy porridge. I suppose it was made of meat scraps and cereal. He placed it on the floor, favored me with a sly wink and backed out of the door. He left without speaking a word.

I smelled the contents of the bowl and forgot at once, any idea I may have had to eating. In half an hour, I would judge, he was back. He swore at me in a guttural tongue and emptied the bowl on the cell floor. He locked me in securely.

That was my final contact with man for approximately twenty-four hours. I say again, I could only guess at time. It was probably a bad guess. I took stock of my assets, and decided I had none. My own clothing was gone, and so was the ruby lens. They had left sandals in place of my shoes.

I was in a panic, for I knew that the ruby lens had brought me here, and without it, I had no opportunity to escape this mad world.

A LONG drawn blast upon a horn brought me out of the stupor I was in. I sat up weakly, bracing myself with my hands on either side against the cot. The cell was only dimly lighted by the torches outside. I was weak with hunger and cold. I managed to struggle to my feet and saw men moving swiftly up and down the corridor beyond the cell door. There was a great rattling of locks and the sound of chains rattling and being dropped. Cell doors near mine were being opened. I waited, daring to hope that I also, would soon be free. I shook from head to foot.

At last my own cell was thrown open and I went out, to mingle with the smells and sounds that hundreds of black, white and yellow men make when crowded into small confines. The warm smell of animal droppings was foul in the air. Slaves were dressed in many costumes. Various colors clashed with the smoking yellow of the torch light.

Something big was happening. I sensed it. There must have been half a thousand of us in the long, wide corridor. Few of them spoke. They milled into groups, like frightened, condemned animals.

I overheard one word:

*"Arena."*

It meant little to me then, for I was not thinking clearly. My mind still clung to thoughts of food and rest and warmth. Slowly, like an immense tidal wave, we started to move in a definite direction down the corridor. I saw soldiers, occasionally, swinging their whips—shouting commands.

I reached a place where light flooded in and blinded me. I threw up my hands to protect my eyes and shuffled on, pushed from behind and on all sides.

Gradually the light wasn't so bad, and I let my hands drop. My face was rough and bearded. My lips, parched and dry, were open and I imagine I wasn't a pretty sight.

Ahead of us, already crowded with men of every breed, was the vast, wooden floored arena that acted as stage to death for the Colosseum. This, then, was Nero's Arena. Around it was a high wall, and above that, row upon row of marble walls and seats. Upward, it seemed to the sky, were line upon line of cleanly robed spectators staring with fixed curiosity at we who came to —death.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Someone thrust a short, blunt blade in my hand. With a listless, detached feeling, I held the blade at my side and continued to stare up at the free, blue sky and the wonderful sight of the Colosseum around me. It was like a nightmare in which you suffer and do not suffer—in which you die a million times, and yet stand there and watch *yourself* die.

Soldiers moved among the throng in the Arena. They herded us about like cattle. We were being roughly divided into two groups, one group on each side of the area.

I was pushed roughly against the wall, and I choked with the heat of the sun and the dryness of the dust that hung over all of us. I judge that there were two armies of men condemned to death, probably a thousand in all.

Above us, in another world, thousands of people were waiting to cheer as we spilled our blood on the plank floor. They were making a game of our misery. Now the Arena was empty of soldiers.

A high pitched trumpet sounded in a distance. I received a rough push in the back that sent me spinning forward. At the same time, cries of hatred rang from hundreds of throats. I managed to keep my feet under me, and lifted the weapon that would decide my own fate. I was conscious of a clean, grinning face close to my own. He was a big man, stripped to the waist, with sweat pouring from every pore. He had a shock of uncombed carrot red hair. He shouted at me.

"Fight like a fool. Give no quarter or you'll die."

That man, for he had evidently been watching, and pitied me, fought at my side from then on like a demon.

His huge shoulders were almost black from the sun and wind. Rippling muscles played under his skin as he leaped, first ahead of me, then to one side. I'm not a fighting man, but when a knife comes ripping toward you, you find ways of keeping it from being buried in your guts. You dodge and scream and slug your way through. You sweat and cry and keep on cutting and hacking at flesh, as long as strength remains in your body. I don't know how long I followed the red headed man into battle. At least once, he warned me with his shouting, so that I could pivot and save my back from receiving ten inches of hard steel.

I was part of this battle, and if I were to live, I had to kill. My heart wasn't in it at first. Fighting for life changes that. There came the time when to kill was my prime mover. To push my sword into soft flesh, rip it loose and plunge again, was the only thing I lived for.

The "game" was no longer an impersonal thing. It was a beast that snarled and pounced upon me, and retreated, when I was lucky, to lick its wounds.

HOW long it went on, I'll never know. I lived to draw blood and I waded in the gore that made the planks slimy and footing uncertain. When it was over, and the trumpets had sounded, I looked around me. Redhead was still there, not ten yards away, grinning at me as though the whole thing had been good fun and necessary exercise. I closed my eyes momentarily to take away the dizziness that flooded over me. Mangled remains of once living men were stacked about like slaughtered cattle.

Then I was aware of a voice, far away and not clear enough for me to understand. I looked up and up, and saw the dazzling thrones of ivory and gold. I saw the lovely woman and the ugly Emperor who sat upon them. It

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was he who spoke. He was holding his hand in the air. His thumb pointed to the sky.

Those who still lived among the blood bath in the arena, were to be spared.

We were given life, at least for the time, by the grace of the pot-bellied, slate-eyed youth who last night, had caused the assassination of his own mother.

Here was Nero, Emperor of all Rome, sparing his slaves while the words he had spoken only last night, still echoed in my ears. Lisping, delicately spoken words, as he stared down at the nude, blood soaked body of the woman who had given him life.

"I did not know I had so beautiful a mother."

Suddenly I forgot everything about me, and could see only him. See him and hate him and feel myself sick in the pit of my stomach.

The man for whom I felt only disgust, ordered me into his presence. I, Ron Crawford, was on my way to talk to Emperor Nero, in his bath.

First I was forced, if force was necessary, to wash myself from head to foot and don clean clothing. As the games were still under way, Nero and his wife were staying in the beautiful apartment behind the thrones, in the heart of the Colosseum. I was taken into a small, tiled room, where Nero was at work cleansing the dust of the day from his ample body. In the center of the place was a huge tub, set into the floor. The ugly Emperor was seated in this tub, suds about his chest, puffing and carrying on like a six year old in the middle of the Saturday night bath. He splashed water with great abandon, and studied me with amused eyes as I stood inside the door, waiting for him to speak. The dull, lusterless eyes moved over me. The thick lips moved at last.

"You wonder why I summon you, slave?"

I knew that it would be wise to act humble before him. I kept my mouth closed, not trusting myself to speak without insulting him. He crawled from the tub and wrapped himself in a huge towel. Then, parading slowly about, his fat toes leaving wet marks on the tile floor, he frowned. His lips were pouted slightly.

"Yesterday I spared your life. Don't you fear that today I might order your death by some interesting manner of torture?"

In spite of myself, I laughed shortly. I felt disgust more than fear.

"Should I flatter myself, that, from hundreds of men, you paid special attention to me?"

He turned slowly and regarded me with certain respect.

"Oddly enough, my thoughts were for you," he said. "I watched you fight yesterday. You were pointed out to me as the mysterious intruder who invaded a certain apartment. You're presence there had special meaning for me."

His eyes narrowed.

"You seem to have in your possession, certain knowledge and perhaps memories that would harm me if generally passed along. I wish to question you."

I WAS sure that he referred not only to his mother, but also to the ruby lens. He could easily have watched me die before I could betray his secret. However, the appearance of myself *and* the strange lens, might be a different story. How much should I tell him? I had to protect my life if that were possible. There were loop-holes through which I might escape. I regarded him with a show of calmness that was not

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in my heart.

"You are interested in the object I brought with me to this place? Without me alive, that object would be worthless. I am able, of course, to exercise certain magic."

At the sound of the word, I'm sure that his eyes showed sparkle and interest. I might be hitting close to the mark.

"The Emperor's Eye," I heard him say, half in a whisper, as though speaking to himself.

Suddenly it was clear to me that the ruby lens and the Emperor's Eye were one and the same. I cursed myself for not remembering before. That term should be familiar to me, but it wasn't. Vague memories stirred within me. Old books I had read. Mysterious stories of an Emperer's Eye, given to a Roman leader by an Egyptian Princess, and later cursed by an Egyptian Priest. If I could only clarify my own thoughts. Nero was watching me closely. He almost seemed to notice my thought process.

"The ruby lens had great power," I said hurriedly. "I brought it with me from a distant land." I had hooked him cleverly. I knew that he was puzzled by the strangeness of my clothing, by my appearance and actions.

"Listen wisely," I said. "I came at an opportune time. I would achieve great power if I betrayed certain information I ran across upon arriving here."

I was playing with Roman dynamite at the moment. His eyes were slits of anger. Murder was his specialty. If he dared . . . ?

"You were in the apartment of Aggripina," he lisped. "You saw certain things there that make you dangerous, alive."

I shrugged.

"On the other hand, I have certain value alive. I am not a Roman or a slave. I came here from a far place, and by employing a great power which you are unable to make use of without my instructions. A place so far that you can never even dream of going there. My knowledge is valuable to you. You know something of the ruby lens. I know much more."

The hatred seemed to drain from him, and instead, I saw lust for a power he coveted. What that power was, even I couldn't guess. "Bluff, Ron," I told myself desperately. "Bluffing is the only way of saving yourself."

"It is truly the Emperor's Eye?"

He had me stumped, for I remembered nothing of importance about the lens. It was nothing but a memory pattern, too faint for me to grasp. I nodded.

"It is the Emperor's Eye," I said.

His voice sank to an eager whisper. He came close to me and put one fat hand on my shoulder.

"The same Eye of magic that belonged to Cleopatra? The Eye that opened magic adventure and wonderful pleasures to the Emperor Caeser?"

I was more at sea than ever. If I could only remember what I knew, and yet what I did *not* know.

"The same," I said. "It has been in my possession. I travelled with it here. In my hands, it is useful. With my death, it will return to the age from which it came. You will never make use of it, once I am harmed."

I wasn't sure that he believed. However, at this moment, the Eye was all important to him. He could not chance a failure to test it. He had on more question.

"Where do you come from, intruder?"

I SMILED broadly. I had the upper hand now.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"From beyond the very chasm of time," I said. "From an age where none of the things that happen here are secret. Call me Master, rather than slave. If I have your friendship, then give me also your respect."

I'm not proving to you that I was brave. I was frightened. I've never been so darned frightened in my life. It was a case of win all or lose everything.

"Your clothing was strange," he said thoughtfully. "The short cloak was of a strange fabric. Your stocking were of rich eastern silk. Rare materials covered your body. You come from the Orient?"

I had him guessing, and I intended to keep him that way.

"I say that I come from beyond the chasm of time," I said. "Now, must I try myself with foolish answers to foolish questions? If you picture a world where buildings touch the sky, and man made machines fly at will through the Heavens, then you see a small part of my world. People in my world can band together in a day, to destroy such a place as this with a single dropped explosive. Now, is that enough, or must I prove . . . ?"

He was shaking his head from side to side, a look of foolish wonder in his eyes.

"Only one thing troubles me," he said. "Are you prepared to forget certain things you saw, upon first coming to Rome?"

Show respect or fear of him, I thought, and you are lost. I drew myself up haughtily.

"I forget nothing," I snapped. "I keep secrets well when they do not concern me. I am your friend as long as you treat me decently. I may share some of the secrets of the Emperor's Eye. I make no promise, however. It depends upon my treatment at your hands."

Nero, for the present, was satisfied and flattered.

"I have made a grave error," he said slowly. "You will be escorted to your rooms. If all is not satisfactory, call upon your slaves, or send for me. I hope that your presence here will bring great satisfaction to you—and perhaps —to me also."

"That," I assured him," sounds more pleasant to me than did the caves of the Colosseum."

Under my outward calm, I was shaking in my sandals. The power of the Emperor's Eye had saved my life, and I had no idea what that power actually was. God grant it, I would remember.

This was the last day of the games. I had slept well and I had dreamed. I have no faith in dreams, other than their effect upon the inner mind. During my rest, (no doubt the most fortunate sleep I had ever slept), there came back to me certain bits of knowledge I had once read and long ago forgotten. The Emperor's Eye, as Nero had said, came from the love enchantress of the Nile, Cleopatra. Cleopatra who had come to Caeser wrapped in rare rugs, to be presented to him in all her loveliness, in his private chamber.

I say that I am a librarian. Thank God for the profession. These bits of fact and fantasy I had consigned to my inner mind over a period of fifteen years at the Museum. The Emperor's Eye was first a love charm, and was later stolen and cursed by an Egyptian Priest who had reason to hate all Romans. It brought only bad luck to Caeser and those who followed him.

Nero could not know of the curse. He knew only of the great power the Eye held as a love charm. With it, they said, a man could be transported to such gardens of perfumed bliss, that

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he need never ask for anything more in Heaven itself. Was that what Nero dreamed of?

After that night of dreams, my head was clear again. Nero wished the love secrets of the charm for himself, and it had never occurred to him that by placing the lens to his eyes, he could achieve sudden results. That these results were not pleasant, he could not know. The Eye was a curse, and he still believed it to be a charm.

This was the knowledge I had managed to regain from the forgotten file cabinet of my mind, on that warm night in my new apartment.

THE sun was bright in the windows of the room. I was up and dressed when slaves brought huge baskets of fruit for me to feast upon. I ate little, for my problem was as great as ever. I couldn't satisfy Nero's lust for the use of the charm, for if he used it, he would suffer as I had, by being tossed away into some remote spot. I would be left to explain what had happened, and with his going, my last avenue of escape would be rudely cut off.

I leaned back on my bed, trying to ignore the sleepiness and content that stole over me with the warmth of the sun. A girl entered the room alone, and came hesitantly toward me. I sat up, staring into deep violet eyes that sparkled with interest and amusement. Her slim, smoothly satin body was draped in seductive silken wraps. Her sandals displayed crimson toe-nails and tiny feet.

I had seen this woman before. Held again by the magic of the eyes, I remembered her. I had watched her from a distance, seated beside Nero in the Colosseum. Poppaea Sabina, enchantress of all men, wife of the Emperor.

"The Emperor has told me of you, intruder,"\she said. "You come truly from a world beyond our time?"

There was a soothing, teasing rhythm to her voice that held me.

"And you are Poppaea Sabina," I said. "I have heard much through history of your loveliness. Of the beauty that weaves a spell about the heart of all men."

Her blush was as innocent and pink as the coloring of a small girl's delicate cheek. She bowed her head slightly.

"Thank you, intruder," she whispered. "Your compliments are weapons, aimed well at my heart."

My thoughts were in reality, a long distance from this room now. If I had played with dynamite in speaking to Nero, then this woman of nobility was the atomic bomb of Rome. Nero would take pleasure in feeding bits of my flesh to the Russians' bears, chained in hunger below the very apartment I occupied. Should he hear the words I had just used, my life was gone as surely as the men who died yesterday.

"I would like to leave this room," I said, and I really mean it. I wanted to get away from her and stay away—as far as I could. "Could I go to the place where we watch the games?"

She seemed alarmed.

"Oh, no, you would not leave me when I am lonely. Nero is dressing. Talk to me, and we three will attend the games together."

I was sure that I had to get away from her while there was time. I started toward the door.

"We will talk some other time," I said. "If you will show me the way to the games. I'm lost in these vast halls."

She seemed resigned. She took my arm, and it was no accident that her fingers pressed tightly into my flesh. She was warm and the warmth created an aroma of perfume that made me dizzy.

"Then come, but I will pout as a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

child, if you pay so little attention to me in the future."

In five minutes, we had pursued a round-about course through the halls and she had left me sitting on a cushioned marble bench where I could look down upon the arena.

I spent ten miserable minutes watching a lion, starved for food, tear down a screaming, dying slave and eat the wretch bit by bit. School children, having their Saturday afternoon off for the games, ate candies and seemed to enjoy themselves as though they watched a good football game. Mothers cheered and fainted, and were revived to cheer some more. The lion and the audience seemed to have good, moral fun. I was sick and had to retreat once more to the halls behind the Colosseum. This time I found my way alone and avoided Poppaea Sabina. I felt safer, once I reached the apartment again.

NERO came for me there some half hour later. He wore his finest robe and walked with delicate, mincing steps. He had eaten and bathed well, for he was in high spirits.

"The good Poppaea tells me you did not like her company," he said upon first seeing me as I stood near the window. "It makes Poppaea feel badly, but frankly, intruder, you are very wise."

I grinned openly at him.

"I have never been attracted to another person's private property," I said, "be it attractive or repulsive."

He nodded and chuckled.

"I would not say that Poppaea was repulsive?"

I shook my head.

"On the contrary," I agreed, "the Emperor shows great good taste. Poppaea Sabina, so it is told in our books of history, is as fine as silk and has most attractive assets. A fine choice for a monarch."

He took the flattery well, and for the present, I had made him forget the Emperor's Eye.

"And now shall we seek the games? I wish to speak later of more important things."

Without asking questions, I followed him down the broad marble halls. We met Poppaea and her group of maid-servants, and with her, went onward toward the marble and gold thrones.

Nero paid no further attention to me after we were seated. The same bench, placed at one side of his own splendid throne, had been reserved for me. I tried to act quiet at ease, for I was playing the part of a man who could be amazed or changed by no experience. In this acting of mine lay security. How long could I keep it up?

There were animal fights. Dozens of lions matched against wild elephants, imported from Africa. Bears fighting to the death with lean, hungry tigers. I watched a man, chained to a heavy pole, and torn to bits by leopards. What amazed me most was the attitude of the people, including the mildest of them, toward such horrible death.

I could picture some grandmother in the back row, taking great interest in the good, clean fun. It was so terrible, and in the same breath, so matter of fact, that I wondered if my own age wasn't a slightly censored version of this same un-varnished lust for blood and human sacrifice.

The part I had dreaded most was the slaughter of humans. Now I knew I could not face what was to come, for two men entered the arena, and each carried a small shield and a shining steel blade.

This was worse than watching the men before, for one of the pair was my friend of the arena a few hours passed, the red headed slave who had saved

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

my life time and again in the fray of battle.

I admired his courage, for he smiled and waved his blade in the air, bowing directly toward the place we occupied. His enemy for the hour was a huge blackmoor, taller by inches than the red head, and looking as black and fierce as the devil of darkness.

A small section of the arena had been raised above the general level. As the two men sprang to the platform, Nero arose, approached me and spoke.

"I grow bored with—this." He waved a hand dramatically toward the arena. "You are my guest, and as such, you will rule the victor. A thumb up, if the vanquished is to live—a thumb down if he is to die. It is simple."

The duel was on as he walked away. I was still thunderstruck by the man who could look upon a man's battle to death as boring and uninteresting to himself. Then it dawned upon me that I had a terrible trust in my hands. I alone would say if these men lived or died.

My eyes glued themselves on the sight below. I became unconscious of everything else that happened about me.

FROM the very first, the red-head had the edge on the black fighter. He was lighter, and therefore swifter on his feet. His sword swung through the air twice, to each blow from the blackmoor. There was terrible strength and energy there, born of desperation. There was no quarter given or asked for.

I watched with fascination as they whirled about each other. Cheers rose like great waves, drowning every small sound. The blades flashed in the sun, sometimes bright, sometimes tinted with droplets of flying blood. I myself was silently cheering for the first time. The man with the red hair had to win. It could not be otherwise.

Suddenly it was all over. My friend of the arena must have slipped in the gore beneath his feet. He fell back, caught himself with one elbow and tried to rise. The blackmoor's blade flashed down and when he lifted it again, the red-head had no weapon. It was spinning swiftly across the planks, to stick, upright and quivering, some yards away from them both.

There was no sound now to disturb my concentration on the scene. My blood pounded in my temples. My heart was sick. It seemed to pound so hard that I thought it would break from my ribs.

Then the blackmoor had his blade risen high above his head. He was looking upward, questioningly, *his eyes on me.*

Slowly I stood up. A sea of white faces were turning, looking upward.

He had won fairly, the blackmoor. There had been no foul play. It was an unfortunate accident. Still, I could make no other choice. My life had been saved, and I must save the red-head's.

I put my thumb up, pointing it into the blue sky.

The blackmoor backed away slowly, never looking at me again. His blade dropped at his side. He moved away. The man with the red hair did not move at once. Then he came to his knees and arose, his head held high. I saw pride there, and bewilderment. He had expected no quarter, but I knew from the pale, set face, that he was grateful.

The audience remained still for a moment. Then, as one voice, a great cheer rang out. I sank back, wiping sweat from my forehead. Popular feeling had approved of my decision. I had done the right thing. How I sat

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

through the remainder of the games, I don't know. I was not called upon for another decision, for death won them all after that. I was sick and unable to think clearly for the remainder of that day.

I sat again in the presence of Nero, and listened to a man who would willingly kill me, if he was sure that he could do so without doing himself harm. I was permitted to live for two reasons. First, he wasn't sure about my real power. Second, he wanted certain knowledge which he believed I possessed. I sat on a low divan opposite his own, and watched him as he chewed delicately at grapes from a heavy stem. We were without attendants, for he wished no one present with the subject of our conversation being so personal.

It was late at night, and I had been brought here by a man-servant to the small, carefully decorated room. Nero was smiling, sure of himself. He tried slowly, with utmost respect, to pump answers from me.

"I am curious as to how you first obtained the Emperor's Eye."

With the knowledge I had been able to recall, I felt sure that I could stall him off for some time. I shrugged, as though the subject was of little importance.

"There was the matter of a Nile Princess who presented herself and the magic love charm to several great Romans. In our advanced world, such a charm is no longer needed. It is but one of our many possessions passed on from your world."

At the mention of Cleopatra, his eyes glistened. He was greatly impressed.

"I AM told that the Emperor's Eye has the power to bring about great changes in a man's power. That it—give him the opportunity to feast upon the lavish passions, without the introduction of drugs."

I nodded, then frowned.

"While it is of great value to a man, and serves him with Heavenly dishes of delight, I caution you not to attempt to use it without my assistance. Those who have tried to fathom its secret alone, have died dreadful deaths, and suffered from even worse fates."

I had guessed his thoughts correctly, for he paled.

"Why so?" he asked abruptly. "What power do you have that I would not have alone?"

I smiled.

"Not power," I assured him, and he seemed to relax. "Rather, let us use the word knowledge. While you have all the power in the world, *I* alone have the knowledge of the Eye. The time, and other points, must be taken into consideration."

As much as I would have enjoyed pushing that ruby charm into his eye and thereby, sending him away for all time, to some remote hell of his own, I dared not do so. Upon my head would lie the blame of his disappearance. In addition, I would never escape myself, without the lens.

"Tell me, intruder," he said suddenly, tossing the grapeless stem to the floor," you claim to have certain vast wells of knowledge, and to have travelled here from great distances. In the light of such knowledge, what do you see in my time that is of great importance?"

This, I thought, is the supreme test—the all important question. The answer would either place me in the position of one who knew dramatic events in advance, so far as he was concerned, or it would brand me as an imposter. How much did I dare say?

"We who travel from time to time, back to ancient cities, are protected by our own magic. While we know of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

events before *you* witness them taking place, by the very nature of history, we are powerless to change it. *Thereby, we can tell what will happen but we can in no way prevent it from happening.*"

He nodded, attempting to look profound and succeeding in looking only stupid and very self contented.

"You speak wisely," he said. "However, I ask for knowledge that will prove your worth to me. Come, intruder, make some of your great predictions."

I was ready when he asked for it, and I gave him an answer that I think affected him more than any words that he ever heard spoken.

"I don't think the citizens of Rome would approve paying their taxes for the construction of the Golden House, do you?"

He came upright on the divan, fists clenched, eyes blazing.

"The plans are private—my own. No one has seen them."

"Careful," I begged, smiling. "Remember, I am not a spy. I do not have to spy upon you."

He relaxed, but he was visibly shaken.

"No matter. The plans have been seen by no one. Go on. I am very much interested."

"Perhaps, *after the fire,*" I continued, "the plans for the Golden House, a fitting place for you, will be more readily accepted. After all, if Rome burns to the ground, it must be re-built."

The Emperor didn't move that time. His eyes widened with honest fear. There were no blueprints that showed that Rome would burn. Only history had told me that. The devilish plan to burn a city to the ground must have been in his mind only. He knew that. He knew that I possessed almost more knowledge than he himself.

"No one knows of—of . . .?"

HIS mouth lolled open. He seemed to lose his power of speech.

"I understand," I said hurriedly. "Remember what I said. I can predict happenings, but I cannot affect their happening in any way. I am only a man and cannot change the course of history that has been written for these thousands of years. You can have respect of me, but you need not fear me. I cannot and would not betray a thing that will happen in spite of myself."

I think I was a form of God to him at that hour. He continued to look at me, and gradually his shaking stopped and he got control over his nerves. I had delivered a long speech and I wasn't entirely sure I had said the right things. Finally he arose from his divan and drew his robe tightly about him. He glanced at the door.

"Perhaps," he faltered," this interview can be prolonged at a later date. For the present, I must rest. You may live with us and rest in the safety of my house. No one will harm you. When you wish to leave, we will say our farewell and be sorry that you must go."

He hurried from the room as though the devil himself were after him. The great Nero, I thought. I have been able to make a coward of an Emperor. For a few hours at least, he's frightened of me. *Frightened of Ron Crawford.*

"You are in every way, a nobleman," I said as he left the room. "And now I must also rest."

I did not go to my own apartment after leaving Nero's chamber. I walked slowly in the corridors. I came at last to the deserted, moon-lit terraces that looked down upon the empty arena. The Colosseum was very beautiful and one would not guess that death had been stalking here so short a time ago.

It was a cool night, glowing silver, with every marble column, each terrace dipped in the stuff and left gleaming.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I was alone, centuries away from my people, centuries away from everything I knew.

I stood by the golden thrones, resting against one of them, staring upward at the same sparkling, untroubled sky that men had looked to for ages, and would look too for many more.

I thought once I heard the tap-tap of gentle footsteps against the marble floor. Then I forgot and looked down at the dark, blacked out area of the arena. When would death walk here again? How long before men would again drain blood from other men? When Nero willed it! When his people wanted more sport. War was like that. Let people live in peace for a time, and they longed again for the blood games. Only the games of my day are worse. They destroy nations at a blow, while brutal Nero killed but a few. How long would we go on having enough raw material to throw into our games of human sacrifice?

*"Must I follow my lover by so many hidden routes?"*

Startled from my dreams, I pivoted, to face Poppaea Sabina. She had come up quietly behind me, and stood there staring up with long lashed eyes, the moon making her a breathing angel of perfection.

Try as I might to condemn this girl—to push her from my mind—I was chocked up inside each time she was near me. I could not control my emotions where she was concerned, and I know that she realized that.

"You shouldn't have come here," I said sternly.

Her lips were in a perfect oval. Her eyes, wide and innocent, stared into my own. Without a word, she put her arms about me and pressed herself close.

I leaned close to her face, smelled the warmth of her perfume and then her lips were pressed to mine, seeking my love.

I broke away from her, trying hard not to prolong the contact.

"You're trying to arrange my death," I said, but I wasn't sure that I even cared.

She smiled and kissed my cheek.

"Call me bad, and unkind and a cheat," she said gently, "but I do not *have* to seek young men in the darkness. I have done so only because you are very different than anyone I have ever met before. You mean much more to me than you can ever guess, intruder."

I'M NOT sure that I could have remained the stern man from a mysterious other world, if at that moment, all Hell hadn't broken loose about us.

How many there were I don't know. I saw the Emperor himself, first. He came from the shadows, and he had not changed his clothing since I left him. He had stalked his prey and caught us cleverly.

Soldiers sprang from all directions. Before I could fight, the girl was torn from me. My arms were pinned behind my back and Nero came close, pushing his ugly face close to mine.

His eyes were blazing as he grasped the girl by the arm and threw her, face down, upon the floor. He kicked her deliberately in the side.

Whirling upon me once more, he growled:

"Let your damned magic help you now, if it will. I have been under your spell long enough. I suspected you would meet her one of these nights. It was your magic that brought *her* to you."

Words were useless. Action was impossible. My arms were held by a dozen men. A sharp blade was pressed tightly against my shoulder. It cut

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

through the robe and was pricking my flesh.

"Throw him down below, where he belongs," Nero shouted. His fury was a terrible thing now. "I'll wager a hungry jungle beast will take care of him and his magic."

They threw me to my knees, and kicked me until my body ached from more blows than I could count. I tried to get up, and once I felt sure that in my attempt to save Poppaea from more of his well aimed kicks, I would be able to reach the pot-bellied fool. He turned on me, however, and while I was still on my knees, sank his foot into my neck. Something snapped and I blacked-out.

How long I was in the windowless cell, I don't know. I was never given food or clothing. I had been stripped from all my clothing and sores festered, bled and turned black on my sides and back. My neck felt as though it was broken.

No man ever went through a worse bit of hell. Through it all, I could see only the girl who had come to me, and who I now swore in my heart, was sincere in her love. Poppaea Sabina I told myself over and over, was in history, a woman who drove men mad with love and left them broken and alone. I couldn't make myself believe that. Perhaps no one had known her as I. Perhaps her lips told the truth. Perhaps her words, tender words, were also, honest. Would it be impossible for a girl who never honestly loved a man during her lifetime, to fall desperately in love with another who comes to her from another age?

All my arguments gained me nothing. I only knew that if I could save her from what was to come, I would save her regardless of what happened to me. Fool, perhaps, but at least a fool honest in his convictions.

I moved about for several hours, resting when I could no longer move. I had to keep my blood circulating, for the dampness of the cell and the cold air that came from the cracked rocks, would freeze me where I sat.

I did not give up easily. I think two days must have passed, but I can only guess the time. I moved about, and rested. At last I could no longer find the energy to rise. I lay still, pressed against the icey floor, gasping for breath. My body cried out for food and strength but they didn't come. Not a sound penetrated the place.

At last I no longer felt the cold or the need of food. I wanted death, and I was conscious only of repeating the girl's name over and over. The vision that name brought to me warmed me. Her arms comforted me in my wait for death.

If I could have heard a sound—just a tiny sound? The stillness was the thing that would destroy my mind. I listened with all the attentiveness I could muster.

Then—long after I ceased to listen, or care, or mouth her name over with my lips, I *heard* the sound.

*He* came. The red-headed man came. He wrenched the cell door open and I know I must have looked like a corpse to him as he gathered me tenderly in his arms. He kicked the door open, carried me out of the cell and up and up over what seemed to be millions of dark, stone steps.

I tried to talk and he covered my lips with his hand. I felt the warmth of his big body giving me new life. I remained quiet, closing my eyes, feeling the tears run down my cheeks. Let someone bring you back from the grave and restore life to you from *his* life, and you would cry also. You would not be ashamed of those tears.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I LAY in the small, warmly covered bed for a week. I stared around at the stone walls and toward the cloth shaded door, too weak to move, without any wish to talk. He came often, always grinning, always happy. He closed the door behind him each time, locking it carefully, and fed me all the food I could take.

As my strength came back, I knew that this was the red-head's room and that he had me hidden here, somewhere below the walls of the Colosseum. One day I sat up, tried a few steps, and felt up to getting around alone. I talked to him that day. He told me what had happened.

"I saw them drag you down into the dungeons," he said. "I knew you were the one I had saved that day in the Arena, and the one who, in turn, had spared my life." He smiled, that same sincere, brotherly smile I had learned to bless him for. "My name is Tiber Corbalo. I am of Roman blood. I caused certain discomfort for Nero, and he wanted to see me die in a blood-bath. He forgot me in the process of passing time, and fortunately for me, he was not present when you pardoned me."

He frowned.

"The clumsy ox hasn't had cause to remember me since. I have been made a trainer of gladiators. I am quite happy."

"You saved my life," I said. "The score is more than even. You took a terrible chance."

His face reddened.

"You were marked for a slow death," he said. "I waited my time, paid the guards well and took you out of there. No one will be the wiser. The Emperor will never ask them to look for your body. You will be forgotten."

Tiber Corbalo arose and strode across the room. He stood before the door, drew away the covering and stared out into the torch-lighted hallway. His finely molded arms were folded across his chest.

"I keep you hidden here. The other slaves dare not enter my quarters, I have certain power here, thanks to you and your pardon."

He pivoted and smiled down at me.

"You must be the very devil with women."

He startled me, and my face felt hot. Before I could interrupt, he went on:

"Poppaea Sabina has been sent to the northern provinces for six months. She raised an awful smell about the whole thing. Dared to swear before the Emperor that you were the first man she ever truly loved." He shook his head sadly. "The girl must have gone mad. She wouldn't have dared say such a thing to Nero if she were sane. Only his great admiration of her beauty kept him from killing her at once."

I hastened to tell him the whole story. I assured him that I had nothing to do with carrying on an affair with the girl.

He shrugged.

"No matter what happened," he said, "I can well imagine her feelings. You *aren't* repulsive, you know. I've seen many Roman women who would have knifed their husbands for a tug at that curly black hair of yours."

I reached for the nearest heavy object, an earthen bowl and threatened to break it over his head. He made a great show of being frightened and promised not to bother me more with the affairs of the heart.

"You say that Poppaea Sabina is in the north?" I asked after some time.

HE SMILED.

"She *was* in the north," he said. "I have heard from certain sources that she has come back to Rome and is in hiding. She, it is told secretly, has

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tried a hundred times to find a way of freeing you."

Then she *was* sincere. She hadn't given me up for dead. I felt much better, though I hoped I didn't show it. I hated to go through another episode such as the one Tiber had subjected me to.

I was thoughtful for some time. Finally I reached my decision.

"I've got to see her," I said. "You know nothing of me, save for the fact that I saved your life. You've repaid me for that debt. Now, tell me where I can find the girl, and I'll clear out of here. You can forget all about me."

He shook his head. His face sobered.

"I owe you more than that," he said. "I am safe in Rome, thanks to you. I'll find a way of escape for you. Above all, I will prevent you from seeking the girl again, and in that manner, losing the one chance you have of saving your neck."

I hated to bring him any deeper into the mess. I knew that I could never find my way about the city alone. I had to see Poppaea.

"Bring the girl here," I said stubbornly.

It was the first time I had seen Tiber show fear. It was visible only in the sudden palor of his face. Then the fear was gone and the color came back.

"Suppose I should manage to reach her," he asked? "Why should she come here with me? It would mean her death if she accompanied me to the Colosseum, and ours as well."

I nodded, realizing that he was right.

"I see that. I cannot endanger you more than I have already."

I had taken advantage of him with those words, and I hadn't meant to. He moved swiftly to his chest and found a short, keanly sharpened dagger. He slipped it into his tunic.

"Where shall I say she is to come? Who shall I say wants to see her?"

A wild hope surged through me.

"Tell Poppaea that the owner of the Emperor's Eye believes in her love and needs her at once."

I knew that if she was honest, she would know the message came only from me, and she would not hesitate. Tiber looked puzzled.

"The Emperor's Eye?"

"That will be enough," I said.

He went to the door.

"I will try. I know friends who may tell me where she is. Don't leave this room. The door is bolted. Ignore anyone who comes. I will come back soon —or not at all."

He was gone and the door was closed tightly. I heard his footsteps fade quickly and the room was barren and lonely. I felt as though my best friend had gone to death—for me.

It was late, and many of the torches had blown out with the gusty wind that swept down the tunnel. Shadowy figures moved past the room occasionally, slowly, their feet dragging from fatigue. It was dark in the room and I had the cloth drawn away from the door. My face was pressed against the bars. I studied every one who approached, my heart beating loud, then soft again when the one I waited for did not come.

Then they came, two hooded shadows, moving closer together, staying in the shadow of the wall. I stepped away from the door, my heart in my mouth. The door grated open, Tiber came in first, drawing a smaller figure behind him.

"It is she," he said. "I will wait."

He was gone again, out into the corridor, lost in the darkness. The room was hushed. We stood in the darkness, two uncertain, lonely souls, waiting for a thread of understanding to draw us together. Then she was clinging to me

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and sobbing and her lips were against my cheek. Tears wet my face. I could almost see the happiness and gratitude that sparkled once more in those violet eyes.

*"Then you did not die?"*

Her voice was a faint whisper.

"I did not die," I said. "I'm—glad you came. I shouldn't have asked. It was wrong, even from the first."

SHE shivered and held me closer.

"It was never wrong. We cannot help it if we meet, across centuries, and love."

"Then you believe me? You know that I'm not one of your people?"

"I never doubted it," she said. Her voice was stronger now. "We will never be happy for more than a moment. You will go. I will die in misery. I am not so dull that I cannot sense my own fate. Only, never tell me. Never forecast what will happen to me. I'd rather not know. I'd rather spend these few precious moments with you, and remember them regardless of the misery that follows."

There was a bond between us then that no one, Nero, or even the Devil who protected Nero, could have broken.

It was to me, the brightest morning in the brightest spot in the world. The girl looked refreshed and so full of love and the will to live, that I wondered at the Hell she had been through at the hands of the Emperor. Tiber, his hair carefully combed, served our breakfast of finest fruits and seated himself with us to share the feast. The room might have been the greatest hall in the palace, we were so content this day.

Poppaea had come last night in the garb of a slave. The dull, brownish material could not hide the beauty of the girl who sat at my side, her fingers entwined in mine.

"The city is bright, this morning," Tiber said. "Nero is cursing his luck and saying that he'll beat you when he finds you."

Poppaea laughed aloud. I had never seen her truly happy before.

"Let the old fool catch me," she said. "If I am never happy again, I will laugh in his face, for he'll never rob me of the wonderfuld company I have at this feast."

Tiber arose and bowed low. Then, seating himself again, his face sobered.

"Now we must consider plans for escape," he said.

Poppaea pressed a kiss to my cheek and said:

"It is quite simple. We will go north dressed as poor peasants. Once away from Rome, we can make our plans."

She looked to me, and her eyes suddenly reflected the sadness that I had felt since Tiber spoke of escape.

"I have not made you love me," she said accusingly.

It made me miserable, for I knew what she *must* know, and would not admit. We had both lost this game, and could not win it together. Our paths lay apart. Thousands of years apart.

"I am not free to go as I'd like to go," I said. "We can't escape by running. Fate and time will catch up with us before the tracks grow cold."

Tiber frowned.

"You wouldn't spurn the love of such a lady?"

He was half teasing, half in earnest. Poor Tiber. He knew very little of the problem we were up against.

"Listen to me, Tiber," I said. "Listen, Poppaea. I do not belong to Rome. I do not belong with you. I came from a strange land, many years away. Poppaea knows this in her heart, but she tries to escape from fate. We cannot do that. Through the power of the Emperor's Eye, I came here against my will. Once it was within my power to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

return, but I fell in love, and would not steal the Eye from Nero and make my escape. I waited too long. Nero has the Eye and I must make another attempt to steal it from him and go back where I belong."

The girl was clinging to me. She sobbed softly.

"I'M NOT a part of this world," I said gently. "In a manner of speaking, I possess rare magic. I know everything that will happen here in your lifetime, and many centuries to follow. All the paths of your lives have been layed out and recorded in history. I can tell you the time of the births, the deaths, and the wars. I know what will happen to Poppaea when I leave her. I refuse to tell her that, but I promise that she will not suffer many days of pain on earth."

The room was deathly still. Tiber stared at me with great respect and amazement.

"If I tried to stay here, I would be swallowed up and destroyed by the things that happen. By events that have no room left in their pages for me. I would become nothing. You do not believe me. Test me, Tiber?"

He looked awed.

"Predict for us what great thing will take place. If such an event does take place, then I will say you are right. That you cannot fight the power of fate that binds you to the future."

"Then listen. I have counted the days roughly since I came here. If I am right, tomorrow will bring a great disaster to Rome. Tomorrow a great fire will run rampage in the city. It is recorded in that manner. The fire will be set by Nero's hand, though that will never be proven in this time. Nero will set about at once, rebuilding the city according to his plan."

"And if this happens, can it make a difference in my love for you?"

I tried to make myself believe that Poppaea was right. That somehow we could see the thing through. At last I was forced to say that this was not true.

"You are tied into the events of history, Poppaea," I said. "You have a certain path to tread, and I can never take you from it. Fate would destroy me in the matter of days, if I interfere with its course."

An utter calmness took possession for the girl's features.

"Then, if this—this fire comes to destroy the city, I will believe you. Then you must find the Emperor's Eye and you must leave me. Will your love die, when you go?"

"When your love dies for me," I said.

She stood up, wrapping the robe about her closely as though afraid of the cold. Her face was deathly white and still.

"Kiss me, then, for I leave until tomorrow."

I felt strange, kissing the lips that had been so warm, and were now cold as death.

"And tomorrow?" I asked.

"Let tomorrow tell its story," she said. "Tiber, will you take me to the place from which I came?"

I made no attempt to stop her then. We were both fighting a hard battle, and it was bad enough for her without using more words.

Tiber Corbalo was breathless and pale as he rushed into the room. I had spent a terrible night, and now, as he sprang toward me across the room, I put my hands on his shoulders and gripped them tightly.

"Easy, man. It has happened?"

He could only shake his head in confirmation. After a time, he found his voice.

"The city is in flames. Half of Rome

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is gone. They say the mad Emperor sits on his balcony, laughing like a fool and enjoying the death of Rome as he enjoys the death of his slaves."

I pushed him back on the cot and waited for him to grow calm. His fists kept clenching and unclenching. He looked at me with fear clouded eyes.

"How—how could you tell us of this. You *are* a man of magic. You are a God. I did not know I, a low born Roman, was saving the life of such as you. What can I do? How can I do more to help you?"

The man was half out of his mind. I sat beside him and talked in a quiet voice.

"I am no more a God than you, Tiber," I said. "But listen to me. We will always be friends. Almost brothers. Now I have proven to you and to Poppaea that I have no place under your sun. I have to go back to my time—today, and as soon as I can get that Eye. As long as I stay here, I will bring more misery to all of us. Tiber, take me to Nero. I'll handle him."

Suddenly he sprang to his feet.

"BY THE Gods," he said in a strange voice," why didn't I think of this yesterday?"

"There is time enough, if we hurry."

"No, no," he cried. "The noblewoman said something to me when I left her. She gave me a message to give you if the fire came."

I was more excited than he, now, but he blurted out his story before I could speak.

"She said, 'There will be no fire, and my lover and I will flee. But, should the fire come, tell him this. Tell him he need not fear. By the time that Rome has burned half-way to the ground, he will have his Emperor's Eye safely in his keeping. That will be my last token of my love for him.' "

"What did she mean? What wildness was in her mind?"

Tiber had thrown open his chest of weapons and drawn out two short-swords. He pressed one of them into my hands.

"Nero still has the Emperor's Eye," he said savagely. "If Poppaea Sabina tried to present you with that token of her sincerity, she must go to the Emperor. He might kill her with his own hands."

I saw red then. I had learned to fight in this strange world, and now I wanted to fight—and kill. If death came as payment, then I could as well die in this age as in another.

We dashed through the halls like madmen. Once in the street, the pungent smoke choking my nostrils, I followed Tiber closely as he hurried through the rubble toward Nero's palace.

How long we ran, I don't know. We reached the palace, and no one guarded the gates or the halls. Everyone had been sent to fight the fire. Flames arose in all directions, and Rome was a madhouse of screaming, shouting, sobbing people.

I followed Tiber up—up, flight after flight of stairs. At last, panting with the exertion, he stopped and drew me back against the wall, pointing to an open door opposite the place where we stood.

Across from us, sitting on a finely wrought divan, and dressed in his finest robes, was Nero.

He was not alone, and I saw that I had come in time. Poppaea Sabina, her figure clad in lusterous black silks, was seated opposite the Emperor, on the thick rug at his feet. She was smiling up at him. I felt no jealousy for her—only fear. I knew that for whatever reason she had come back to him, she had done it to help me.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nero was listening attentively to the girl, and a pouting smile was on his thick lips.

I wanted to rush to him and throttle him by the thick, greasy throat. Only Tiber held me back, making me think, giving me time to collect my wits. I could hear Nero clearly, for the sounds of the crucified city came from far below and were hushed by the distance.

"So you, Poppaea, my pretty one, grew frightened and lonely. You came back to me."

I knew the hatred for him behind the cloak of sweetness in the girl's reply.

"More than that, I offer myself as a willing slave. I am happy that the intruder is dead. I hope he died in misery in that foul cell. He made me care for him with his dreadful magic. I am glad he is gone."

NERO reached down and took her wrist in his fat hand. He twisted it cruelly, smiling as he did so. He drew her up and kissed her roughly on the mouth. I watched her try to draw away, and then smile at him as he released her.

"I have one wish," she said, "and I wish it before I am completely happy."

He grinned.

"Anything to make *you* happy."

The girl was a good actor. I thank God she was acting then, for she would have broken my heart if she had been sincere.

"The Emperor's Eye," she said. "Give it to me and let me destroy it. With that last terrible charm gone, I can forget the intruder. Thoughts of him will never trouble us again."

Nero stiffened. He twisted her wrist again, so hard this time that she cried out with the pain.

*"No,"* he said, and his voice was like the sound of a purring cat. "The Eye is mine and I'll not part with it. I may explore its possibilities."

Her face did not betray her, and her eyes, the perfect poise of her head, made her appear calm and unconcerned.

"Then you have it with you? It is safe?"

He slipped just a trifle. It was a small movement, but she noticed, as I did. He patted the pocket of his robe.

"Quite safe—and now . . ."

He pushed her away from him in sudden rage. He stood up, kicked her savagely as she lay on the floor and walked past her to the balcony without looking back. He stood there with the breeze stirring his robe.

"In a way," he mused, "the burning of Rome is a very beautiful and satisfactory sight."

He turned and surveyed the girl on the floor. She was on her knees, still supporting her body with her arms to keep from falling.

"My girl, a greater city will rise from this corrupt mess. You will be proud to be the mother of my child, and to see him grow to manhood in the Golden House. You will be proud to think that I have done so much good for you."

The girl managed to come to her knees. Her eyes were full of tears. She was magnificent in her courage.

"I'll die before I bear a child," she cried.

Nero's eyes narrowed. He moved toward her swiftly. My temper got the better of me. I had watched her suffer too much at his hand. I wrenched myself away from Tiber and sprang across the hall and into the room. Tiber shouted and tried to call me back. I watched Nero coolly as though he was something that I was going to destroy and had a beautiful faith in my ability to do the job. He stopped in his tracks and his pudgy face was drained of col-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

or. His voice gasped out, as though he faced a ghost. Indeed, I was a ghost to him, long dead in the cell beneath the Colosseum.

"You . . .?"

I jumped over the girl, and landed a heavy blow squarely in his face. I felt the impact of bone and watched the blood trickle from his lips as he went down. Tiber shouted again, but I was a madman. I dropped on his fat stomach, felt the wind go out of him, and started to throttle him with both hands. I pressed tighter and tighter, and saw the skin turn faintly purple. His breath wheezed in and out of him, and he started to relax.

Something caught me a sturdy clip beside the head, and I let go and rolled over, coming to my feet with stars before my eyes. It was then that I realized what a fool I had been.

ONLY a fool would have believed that Nero would stay here alone with the girl, without guards. There were three of them in the room, and two were cornering Tiber, who already fought desperately with his weapon. I, in my foolhardy dash at Nero, had dropped my sword near the door. I stood there now, the third man standing one pace away, sword pressed into my ribs.

The soldier was a flat nosed, dark faced man with a hungry look on his face. His eyes were grim with humor.

"Move, intruder," he said in a low voice. "Move, or I take pleasure in slitting your gullet."

"Seize him," Nero cried. He was on his feet now, panting, one hand held to his throat. "Don't let him escape."

He was almost pathetic in his anxiety to keep me alive and where he could reach me.

My greatest concern was for Tiber. He was a match for the two men he now exchanged blows with, but how long before more would come? If he was caught here, he would be murdered without mercy.

I heard Poppaea cry out my own unworded plea.

"Flee, Tiber, while you can. I will care for him."

My eyes went to her, and I saw that she was standing alone, her body taut, hands clenched.

Tiber paused and seemed to listen. He knew what would happen when he was captured. Yet he hesitated to leave us. I knew that regardless of what happened to Poppaea and I, he must escape before it was too late.

"I am safe, Tiber," I cried. "My magic will save us. You must go."

Thank God his belief in my magic was sincere. He knew that I had predicted the coming of the fire.

He broke away from his enemies, took a last slashing blow that brought flowing blood, and turned to run. He spoke in a measured voice, taking every advantage of his moments of safety.

"If I thought you were in danger, I would stay until death. Your magic is good. I'm sorry I have none."

His footsteps pounded in the corridor and faded. No one moved to follow. Nero seemed satisfied.

"Strip this man of magic," he shouted. "It will take the three of you, weaklings that you are. We will catch the lesser fool when time permits."

My robe was torn from me, and leather thongs held me so tightly that I could not move. They brought a whip, and Nero grunted and panted with effort each time he brought that leather thong down across my naked back.

Poppaea Sabina had not forgotten her promise. I saw her watch for the moment that must come. Then, swiftly

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and with the fury of a graceful jungle cat, she sprang upon Nero's back. With a cry, he went down, falling across me. She sat astride him, her own safety forgotten, and clawed his face with one hand while she sought the pocket of his robe with the other.

The soldiers stood there, staring foolishly at the woman fighting with their Emperor. They were so amazed that they made no movement to stop her.

Before anyone quite knew what was taking place, she fell free of the Emperor and kneeled, sobbing, beside me. Tears streamed from her eyes. She placed her arms tenderly about me and whispered in my ear.

"Go swiftly, while I can bear to part with you." Blood stained her robe, where she touched my back. She pressed the ruby lens into my eye. I saw that red sea of blood and at the same time, felt her lips seeking my own as she locked herself in my embrace. Then her lips were gone—all sound and strife was gone.

I was whirling end over end. My body was rigid. I was falling into that deep, running sea of blood. It was a crazy, dream-like thing that I fell through. I recognized it, though, for it was not the first time.

I was coming—back.

I OPENED my eyes slowly. I felt my aching, bleeding back, and my fingers came away stained with my own blood. A torn, dirty robe lay on the floor at my side. I stared up at the smoky, dingy ceiling. I tried to force myself up on one elbow. There came the sudden sound of tinkling glass.

The room was still. It was night, and around me was a collection of assorted musical instruments, typewriters, a tray of caged jewelry.

Through two very dirty windows, I saw lights on the street. Green and red neon lights.

I dropped full length upon the floor again, rolled my head to one side and saw the broken glass—the last bits of the crushed Emperor's Eye, laying in droplets of my own blood.

I don't know how I got out of that store. The shop was locked. I stayed until I had the strength to go on. I stole a badly worn suit of clothing from the rack. I broke the lock with a bar I found in the window. I reached home through the alleys, and crawled up the back stairs to the safety of my room. *I'm glad that no one found me that night.*

Do you know much of history?

Poppaea Sabina, lovely, clever Poppaea, kept her promise to the Emperor Nero. She died while she was still young and beautiful, and died bearing his child. As for myself, I can say little. I have the robe and the sandals. I carry the marks of the whip on my back. More than anything else, I carry other marks bitten deep into my heart.

I read a short article in the Central Times:

"Thieves broke into a pawn shop on Kenmoor Avenue last night, and stole a suit of clothing. Blood on the floor and bits of broken glass were the only clues. Police think . . ."

You are not interested in what the police think. You wonder about my love for Poppaea Sabina. Poppaea holds a place in history that many men do not rate highly. They say she was 'fast,' even for those times. I say that she was a true and sincere lover. Tiber Corbalo has no place in history, so I assume that he never again met Nero or was tortured by the Emperor's hand.

As for me? What can I say? You won't find the name, Ron Crawford, stamped across the face of Roman his-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tory. I changed nothing and I made no mark upon that world. I only succeeded in loving and gaining the love of a girl who, under different circumstances, would have made me a faithful, beautiful wife.

The Emperor's Eye has been destroyed, and I'm glad of that. I'm afraid in my loneliness for Poppaea, I might go back sometime in search of her. In search of a girl who has by now died, and in death, remained faithful to me. Perhaps time has other tricks to play upon us both. Perhaps time will cross in some crazy manner, and we will be together again. I only know that I could not bear to return, and stand in the stillness of her marble tomb.

---

# OUT OF ANY WAR

★ By ALEXANDER BLADE ★

OUT of any war come many stories of mysterious happenings. They are hard to believe, yet those who share the experience swear to the truth of it. This, then, is one.

Hunt Robert fought and was killed in World War I. Being an only child he and his mother were very close, as is the case so often between mother and son. She was like any other mother whose son goes away to war. She didn't want him to go. She had the feeling that once he left America she would never see him alive again. And she was right, because he had not been in France long when he moved up to the front lines and was killed.

The War Department merely stated he was killed in action, but there were conflicting stories from the men who were near him when he died. The story which was mostly generally accepted was that he had been hit, suffering the loss of a leg. He was then placed in an ambulance. No sooner had it started to leave the field when a shell fell on it, completely demolishing the ambulance and all who were in it.

Shortly before news of Hunt's death was received Mrs. Robert had a dream. In this dream she was walking along a winding road. Becoming tired she sat down on a large stone beside the road to rest. There was nothing familiar about the landscape, and she had the certain conviction that she was in a foreign country.

She had not sat beside the road long when she heard the tramping of many feet, marching in measured cadence. Turning in the direction of the sound she saw far down the road a long line of marching troops. As they came abreast of her she saw that they wore the uniforms of different countries, yet they marched together, looking to neither the right or felt, but straight ahead.

The line seemed to be endless, and she watched it for what seemed to be hours. Again, somehow she knew she was watching for someone but did not know for whom it was. Suddenly she knew, for there marching in the column, looking straight ahead, was her son Hunt. Calling to him eagerly, she got up and ran toward the line. Hunt turned his head, saw her, and stepped out of the line to her arms. For a short space he held her closely, and then with a note of pain and sadness in his voice he told her he would have to leave her and that she must return home. He then turned, stepped back in line and marched away. When she wakened, full of sadness, she was sure that the dream had been real, and that she had really held Hunt in her arms. Shortly afterwards came the news that he had been killed in combat, but it was merely confirmation of what she already knew.

I suppose you could say that Mrs. Robert's grief was boundless. I do know, however, that she never cried. Her sorrow was all bound up inside of her in a tight knot, and she wore a look of intense suffering that did not lessen as time went by.

My mother and Mrs. Robert were very close friends, and mother, knowing the love that existed between Mrs. Robert and Hunt, was probably more upset about the situation than any other woman in the neighborhood. Perhaps, as a result of this, it was the reason she was to play an important part in what followed. Truly important because it helped immeasurably to ease the strain and sorrow that came with Hunt's death.

On Thanksgiving following the death of Hunt my mother had a dream. My brothers and I had gone out to play this afternoon. Dad was stretched on the davenport sound asleep. Mother, after cleaning up the dishes from dinner, decided to take a nap also (she needed it more than dad did). While she slept she dreamed, and the dream was as vivid as though she were wide awake. She heard a knock on the side door, and getting up she went to the door and answered the knock. There on the porch stood Hunt Robert dressed in his uniform. Mother was dumbfounded, but finally she got hold of herself and told him to come in, and in the same breath asked if he had been to see his mother yet. Hunt stood there with a pleading look in his eyes, and raised both hands as if asking for help.

"Hunt, what is it, what do you want?" asked Mother, but he just shook his head in a negative gesture and turned and walked down the steps.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mother watched him walk down the hill and get on a street-car headed for up town.

She has no idea how long she slept after that, but when she wakened she was trembling. She went in the living room and woke dad up, and told him what had happened. Dad being a rather down to earth person finally calmed her and convinced her that the mince pie we had had for dessert had been partly to blame. He even talked her out of telling Mrs. Robert, reminding mother that they had talked about Hunt that morning, and any news of that type would only upset Mrs. Robert. Mother finally agreed, but remained upset about it for weeks afterward. Finally, like most dreams it receded to the background of her mind, bothering her only occasionally.

When the next Thanksgiving rolled around, nothing was said of the occurrence of the previous one. I. don't know whether mother and dad stayed away from the subject purposely, or whether they had really forgotten it. However, they weren't to be allowed to forget it. The circumstances were repeated. Again mother laid down for her nap, and again came the knock on the side door, and again Hunt stood there in that pleading attitude. This time his uniform showed signs of wear and he was thinner. Mother tried vainly to get his message but was unsuccessful, and he went down the hill and boarded the street-car for uptown.

This time it was with only the greatest of difficulty that dad was able to dissuade mother from telling Mrs. Robert. He finally won out after considerable argument and a sharp exchange of words.

Hunt called again the third Thanksgiving. The circumstances of the dream were the same, and Hunt stood on the threshold pleading. His uniform was ragged and worn, and he was pale and thin. Hunt was making a supreme effort this time. He looked at her; intense concentration showed on his face, and suddenly words began to form in her mind.

"Please—you must tell my mother to stop grieving for me. I cannot return. Her sorrow is holding me back. I cannot go upward—onward. Unless she stops grieving I am lost."

With great effort mother forced herself awake. She said nothing to dad, but getting her coat she went over to Mrs. Robert immediately. Once there, she told Mrs. Robert of her dreams regarding Hunt. Mrs. Robert admitted that her rest had been disturbed by queer dreams. She had dreamed of Hunt, dreamed that he was having trouble, but had been unable to understand the reason for them.

There is little left to tell. Mrs. Robert was different after that. It was evident she had stopped sorrowing somewhat, and shortly after they left for California. Hunt returned no more.

# THE GREEN TOWER

By SANDY MILLER

THE Chinese admiration for jade goes back into the early centuries of their development. We always associate this beautiful stone with this particular group of Orientals as they have used it in many ways throughout the ages. Even an ancient Chinese story has as its moral the saying "I will burn jade!" When a Chinaman makes this statement he is thinking of a happening in the time of a King named Chou who ruled in China many centuries ago.

Chou was married to a very beautiful woman whom he loved so deeply that he felt a need to prove his great affection. One day Chou asked his lovely young bride to name the object that she wanted most and that he would obtain it for her. The lovely Ta Chi thought a long time before replying. What wish was closest to her heart? It was true that she had everything that anyone could want, but being a queen there must be something which would exalt her majesty? What she loved most was the beautiful and prized jade. How she admired the soft green color and the smooth feel of the stone. Her eyes were sparkling when she told her spouse that what she desired most was a tall tower, the tallest in the world, made completely of precious jade. When Chou heard his loved one's wish he immediately called together his builders and told them of the project. Soon the tower began to rise, and as it grew it became truly an object of great beauty. When Ta Chi saw the gleaming green structure she almost wept for joy. Her husband was so pleased that he commanded his workers to build it higher and higher. Soon the tower almost reached into the clouds. Chou's happiness over the pleasure which the tower gave to his wife blinded him to the state of affairs in his kingdom. His treasury was depleted because of the tremendous cost of the structure. As a result of this the country was an easy prey for the crafty King of Wu. Rather than face defeat with his army, Chou escaped into his tower. He sat for a long while at the very top gazing over his once prosperous land. Finally in desperation he set fire to himself and to the edifice. Chou preferred to mingle with the ashes of his building rather than to face the ruin of his people which he had so selfishly caused.

Today when one expects defeat in an endeavor which will be attempted, the remark "I will burn jade" would be a way of expressing the hopelessness of the situation. Try this remark when encountering a Chinese person, and see if this moral of the age-old tale is still remembered. To burn jade—to expect defeat.

* * *

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The two men raised their cutlasses, oblivious of the clamor of battle around them . . .



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# SHADES of HENRY MORGAN

by H. B. HICKEY

**History shows that a pirate named Morgan lived—and died or so it seems . . .**

"DAMAGE is estimated at thirteen million dollars in the Miami area. The hurricane has continued inland with diminished force and is expected to strike . . ."

Hank Morgan switched off the radio. He wondered dully if the Dolphin was included in the damage estimate. "Should have stayed in Iowa," he reflected, "but no, I had to be a sailor!"

He cursed to himself. The flat Iowa cornland would look good to him now although eight years ago it hadn't. Well, he'd always wanted to be a sailor and he'd become one. Six years in the merchant marine before he'd got his papers and then he'd come to Miami and bought the Dolphin, a forty foot trawler.

Now he could imagine what was left of it after the hurricane. "Probably kindling wood," he muttered. "Well, Morgan, it'll be back to the freighters for you until you can make enough to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

buy a new boat."

He shrugged into a pea jacket and prepared to go to the docks. Might as well get the bad news over with. There were a few torn branches before the garage door but he quickly removed them. In a few minutes he was on the road.

With the end of the storm the clouds had gone, and now a warm southern moon made fantastic shapes of the wreckage the hurricane had piled along the beach. Morgan wondered how many ships had been buried on these shores. Every time there was a storm it shifted the sand to disclose for a little while the hulls of ships which had been driven ashore. In a few days the sand would cover them again.

Hank slammed on the brakes with a suddenness that threw him against the wheel. "I must be goin' batty with worry," he thought. He rubbed his eyes and took another look. It was still there!

He clambered out and walked along the beach to get a closer look. He pinched himself and glanced away. "One . . . two . . . three . . ." he counted before turning back.

The illusion persisted. "Take an old hull, add a touch of moonlight, and you've got a seventeenth century frigate, sails set and ready to go!" Morgan thought. "Still, I'd like to get a closer look at it."

HE SKIRTED a boulder and slowly made his way through the still wet sand. The sea lapped gently at the frigate, exchanging sailing lore with it in a murmur that brought to Morgan the old feeling that had made him a sea-faring man long before he'd seen the sea.

"Who goes?" The voice came from behind Morgan and made him jump. The sand must have muffled the other's approach and now the moon coming from behind him put his face in shadow and disclosed only that he was shrouded in a cape that made him appear a shapeless blot.

"Henry Morgan!" Hank answered. The moonlight caught him square in the face as he turned.

"Ayie!" the man in the cape shrieked. "Morgan!" He darted toward the ship, evading Hank's grasp as he ran.

"Hey! Come back here!" Morgan called. His words seemed to put wings on the other's feet. Morgan chased after him.

The man in the cape was fifty feet ahead of Hank when he reached the ship. His garment billowed out behind him as he grabbed a rope ladder which hung to the sand and made his way nimbly up, as agile as a monkey on a string.

Morgan clambered after him, losing ground at every step. At last he reached the gunwale and tumbled over. He landed on the deck and scrambled to his feet. There was a sound from behind him and he swung around to face it.

Too late! His glimpse of the belaying pin came a split second before it crashed against his skull. There was a blinding flash as it landed, and then darkness. . .

There was a frigate in Morgan's dream. The breeze filled its sails and it skimmed through the Caribbean waters with only the slightest roll. The roll persisted even after Hank opened his eyes. At first he thought it was his head that rolled, for the waves of nausea that engulfed him made the cabin he was in seem to spin.

At last he managed to fix his gaze on a lantern that swung from the ceiling. After a while his head cleared and he was able to tell that the lantern, and not his eyes, was at fault.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Morgan tried to sit up and found that his hands had been tied behind him and made fast to a ring behind the bunk he was lying in. He was experimenting with the knots when he heard someone enter the cabin.

It was a black-bearded giant with a patch over one eye. His shirt was filthy and ended at the elbows, and the sleeves were in shreds, giving the enormous biceps under them room for play. Behind the big man there were others, staring past him at Morgan with mingled fear and wonder.

"Morgan!" the big man roared. "We thought you were in Jamaica!"

Hank stared at him. "What made you think that?" he asked.

"Aye! What made us think that? 'Twould not be Morgan were he found where you'd expect him! But I never thought you'd turn up here!"

HE STUDIED Hank for a while. "Aye! We thought you were getting soft. That the fine ladies in Jamaica had turned your head! Well, maybe they did. But not enough so you'd be willing to give your men the shares they had coming to them. You're too late, though. We've the map and we'll have our loot and your blood, both."

"What the hell are you talking about?" Hank wanted to know. "Who are you, anyway?"

The big man stared at Hank and then at the men behind him. "I told you Morgan was a cool one! Who am I he wants to know. As though I hadn't served with him for seven years!"

He motioned the others to enter the cabin and they crowded in, staring at Morgan as he lay on the bunk. "Well, there he is! The man that was the scourge of the Main! And the best master that ever lived, until he got notions of becoming a gentleman!"

Hank shook his head. "I don't get it. You say you served with me? I never saw you before in my life!"

The man with the patch leaned over the bunk. "So you never saw Black John before, eh? Well, I don't know what your game is but I can tell you you'll not be seeing him much longer." He cursed fluently. "I'll have your heart, you traitor!" He spit into Hank's face.

Morgan's reflex was instantaneous. His foot lashed out to catch Black John square in the middle, doubling him over and driving him across the cabin. He was on his feet in an instant, an ugly curved dagger in his hand as he charged toward Morgan.

Someone tripped the bearded man and he slid into a table, sending it crashing. Before he could rise the man who had tripped him was over him with a cutlass.

"Aye, you fool! Kill him and we've as good as lost the treasure! You near killed us all with your navigating, and now you'd rid us of the only man aboard who can sail a ship!"

The others chorused agreement. "I'm for Morgan!" a sailor with a gaudy scarf around his head shouted.

The man with the cutlass allowed Black John to get up. "I'm for a vote," he announced. Black John stared at him with hatred.

"We're done for if we give him another chance to cheat us," the big man told them. "If we listen to Simon we'll be putting ourselves in Morgan's hands."

Simon sneered. "And if we leave ourselves in Black John's hands we'll find ourselves beached again! There's not a man aboard who can navigate so what good is the map? We could sail for the rest of our lives without finding that tiny island. We can watch Morgan to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

see he doesn't try any tricks."

"Wait a second," Hank interrupted. "Why doesn't someone tell me what this is all about? I can't get head or tail out of all this arguing."

"Liar!" Black John hissed.

"Maybe not," Simon told him. "That whack you fetched him was enough to make a man forget his own mother."

"Too bad I didn't hit him harder. 'Twould have saved us this bickering."

"That's neither here nor there. He's alive and the thing we must do is decide whether we can use him or not."

Simon looked at Hank. "Are you with us, Morgan?"

"Hold your horses," Hank told him. "Maybe it was that crack on the head that scrambled my brains, but I haven't the faintest idea of what you're talking about. If you'll explain it to me I might be able to answer your question."

SIMON looked at the others. He's bound securely. Can't do any harm to gab a while." They nodded, and he turned back to Hank.

"You know your name's Henry Morgan, don't you?" Hank nodded.

"You say you don't know who we are?" Hank nodded again.

"Well," Simon told him, "we're Henry Morgan's men! The same as took Porto Bello with you and the same as sacked Maracaibo. Only we never got our share of the loot from Maracaibo! You buried the treasure on some small island and killed all but one of the men who were with you when you did it. Then you went back to Jamaica and left us to shift for ourselves. Well, Black John and the one man who was left alive got together. This other, Peleg, had the map. He got John to round us up and we're in search of the island now."

"Where's Peleg now?"

"Aye, where is he? He changed his mind about throwing in with us and went after it hisself. But we had a copy of the map by then and if we make good time we may beat him to it."

"But you don't have a navigator, eh?" Hank asked.

"That's right. Peleg is a good one but the rest of us are all plain seamen. John wanted to try for it but the storm beached us and we're lucky to have got off alive."

Morgan shook his head in an attempt to clear it. "I still don't get it. I mean this business about Porto Bello and Maracaibo. When was I in Maracaibo?"

"Why, last year. Sixty-nine!"

"Sixty-nine!"

"Aye, sixteen-sixty-nine."

Suddenly Hank began to laugh. "Say, I'm finally getting it!" But the faces around him were more bewildered than ever. Then he remembered the blow on his head.

"Enough is enough," he said. "It wasn't necessary to hit me with that belaying pin, was it? And where the devil have you got the cameras concealed?"

"S'death!" one of the sailors blurted. "The man is fair daft! I'll not put my life in his hands."

"Daft or up to his tricks," Black John agreed. "But I'd sooner take my chances on another hurricane than trust him." The curved dagger appeared again in his hand, and this time the men were with him as he moved toward the bunk.

Simon's cutlass was a blur in the flickering lantern light. "Hold, you fool!" Black John stopped in his tracks. Simon was the smaller man, slender and wiry, but there was that in his voice that showed his sureness of himself and his weapons.

The slender man resumed his questioning. "Now, you say you remember

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

naught of Porto Bello and Maracaibo?"

Morgan shook his head to clear it. These men were not acting! But if they weren't. . . . He had to find out. "Wait," he told Simon. "Tell me how you happened to beach on this shore."

SIMON thought that over. "Tmay be that I can refresh your memory. I've heard of stranger things." He leaned closer to Morgan.

"Now, as I was saying, we took and sacked Maracaibo. But the Spaniard was hot after us and he had three ships of the line to our two frigates. So instead of heading for Jamaica direct, you took the long way around and went up the coast and around Cuba, then through the Windward Passage. It was before we hit the Windward, somewhere near the Crooked Islands, that you buried the loot. Does that recall it to you?"

"Keep going," Hank told him. "From there I'm supposed to have gone to Jamaica, according to you. But what did you do?"

Simon was patient. "We came together at Port de Paix. As I told you, Peleg left us there. We started north, but ran into this hurricane. Where it took us I can't say, but at last we were driven up on this beach with a force that fair knocked our brains from our heads. When we came to, the storm was over. Thinking we might be in Spanish territory, we set out sentries while we worked to loose the ship. But it appears that by some miracle we were driven near Jamaica."

"You're wrong," Hank told him. "You're nowhere near Jamaica. And you're wrong about something else too. My name is Henry Morgan, but I'm not the one you think I am."

Black John let out a guffaw that shook the cabin. "'Sblood! But the man has a nerve! Not the one we want, eh? Let me at him and I'll cut the lying tongue from his mouth! He can write directions, instead of talking."

"'Twere good enough," Simon told him, "if you could read!" His reply set the others to laughing and broke up the tension. But his own dark face was thoughtful.

"In truth," he told Hank, "the clothes you wear are fair outlandish. And Morgan was always a dandy, never without the ruffle at his throat, even at a boarding."

He leaned over Hank, studying his face and his figure. "Your face is Morgan's, all right, but thinner than I last recall it. And your shoulders are his too, at least in width, if not in heft."

"Wait," Black John interrupted. "If you'll remember, Morgan has three warts on his arm, near the elbow!"

Simon nodded. "I had forgot. We'll soon see, now." He pulled a knife from his belt, and with a single stroke slit Hank's jacket from wrist to elbow. Then he ripped the shirt sleeve away.

Morgan was sweating. He knew the three warts were there; they'd been there as long as he could remember. Suddenly it all made sense. Now he knew why an Iowa farm boy who'd never seen the sea should have felt such a call to it. Now he knew why sea lore had been so easy to pick up, almost as though he'd know it all before.

He had known it. At least another Henry Morgan had, and had passed the knowledge along an almost three century trail of chromosomes in the Morgan blood. And there was more knowledge there, if he could only tap it.

Simon was speaking. "Here they are! I'm beginning to think you may be right, after all, John. He may prove too wily for us to handle."

BUT something was coming through to Hank. The warts might be in-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

herited, but there were other things which wouldn't.

"Hold it!" he cried. "How about other marks? Don't you remember any scars? Old battle wounds?"

"And you so handy with your weapons?" Black John sneered. "But I do remember one. Not over two years it is, when we took the Isabella, and the Spaniard met you with a pike as you came over the side. Your belly will bear that scar to your dying day."

Simon ripped open the pea jacket and tore Hank's shirt off. His belly was free of scars.

"Well, do you believe me now?" Hank asked.

Black John shook his head in bewilderment. "I stanched the flow of blood with my own hands. And tended the wound afterwards. That long the rip was." He spread his hands to indicate a gash at least foot long.

"There are those who claim Henry Morgan is in league with the devil," Simon was muttering. "An old hag's talk, I always said. But now I don't know."

He stared down at Hank. "If you're not Morgan, then who the devil are you?"

"I don't think you'd understand," Hank told him. Inside Morgan a thrill of excitement was mounting. The cabin with its swaying lantern seemed familiar to him; the piratical faces that surrounded him were as well remembered as old friends. Even their archaic speech sounded natural in his ears.

"What difference does it make who I am?" he asked Simon. "Call me Morgan or call me Old Nick, I can navigate and I'm with you if you'll have me! What do you say?"

Simon's eyes narrowed to slits. They were as cruel as Black John's but more calculating. "Aye," he said, slowly nodding, "we'll have you. And these are the terms: share and share alike."

"Agreed," Hank said. "Now let me up and I'll shake your hand on it."

The knife slid behind his back. A single twist of the razor-sharp blade and he was free. He sat up rubbing his wrists to bring back the circulation and grinning around at them. But their eyes were still watchful, as though they doubted him.

He stared at them, meeting their unspoken challenge squarely. "Well, what is it now?"

It was the man with the gaudy scarf about his head who spoke up. "Aye, you're with us. But are you one of us? That's what I want to know! Happen we meet Peleg, what would you do? What *could* you do?" The others nodded in agreement.

Hank saw it clearly. As Morgan they feared but respected him. As a stranger he would have to prove his fitness. They were right, of course. No room on this ship for a man who couldn't hold his own in a fight.

Silence hung heavy in the room as Simon handed him the knife. There was no need for speech; every man knew what was expected. This was the test.

THE knife was heavy in Hank's hand. Yet, strangely enough, it was comfortable. The handle fitted his palm as though he himself had carved it. With a flip he tossed it so that it came down point first to his fingers. He had never thrown a knife but he knew that this one would do his bidding.

One of the pirates was leaning against the cabin door, slowly twirling in his fingers the end of his drooping moustache. Hank felt a moment of doubt as he thought of what he was going to do. But somehow he knew that he would succeed.

Without seeming to look at the man

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

against the door, Hank raised the knife to shoulder level. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the tiny space between lip and fingers. Then, with a sudden flick, the knife was in the air. And paralyzed fingers held a loose clump of hair!

But he was not over the last hurdle yet, Hank knew. He had won their respect; could he win their friendship? The slightest hint of gloating would set them against him. How could he clinch the thing? What would the old Henry Morgan have done in this situation? As though a voice had whispered the answer in his ear, Hank knew.

"Rum for all hands!" he roared, leaping from the bunk. There was a draining of tension, like water running from a pool.

Then Simon took his hand and the swarthy pirate was smiling. "Aye, we've picked a good one, mates. He'll lead us to the treasure and he'll fight for it with us, if fight we must. And to hell with Henry Morgan!"

"I'm with you on all but the last," Hank grinned. Someone shoved a dipper in his hand and he drank the fiery rum. For a moment his throat was on fire but he kept smiling.

"Then it's agreed," Simon told him. "You'll act as captain on consent of the crew." He turned to the others. "On deck now, mates. John and I will remain here with Morgan to chart the course."

When the others had gone he picked up the chair Black John had knocked over and set it up beneath the lantern. The three gathered around it as the black bearded giant pulled a rolled parchment from under his shirt.

Unrolled, the map proved to be exactly, but roughly drawn. It had evidently been traced from another. The scale in the upper left hand corner was drawn in leagues.

To the northeast was a string of small islands that were sparated by water from a long island which ran parallel to them. Jamaica was to the southwest, which made the long island Cuba, although it was unmarked on the map, and the smaller ones the Bahamas.

From Jamaica northeast through the Windward Passage an almost straight line could be drawn past Great Inaugua and the Caicos Islands. If another line were drawn from Nassau to San Juan it would intersect that first line at a spot on the map which had been marked X.

Of course, Hank reflected, it seemed that simple only on paper. The islands in that region were tiny and there might be fifty of them within the range of probably error.

"Can you get us there?" Black John wanted to know.

"Of course. But like most rough maps this one is too simple. I'm thinking that once we get there we'll have a job finding just the little island we want."

A cunning grin spread over the black bearded face. "I've a good description of that place from Peleg. We won't miss it."

"And after we land?"

THE huge man patted his belt at the spot where his dagger was sheathed. "Then I produce this map of the island. Until we land no one sees it."

Hank nodded. "What's fair for the others is fair for me. But let's get on deck so I can see where we are now."

In the moonlight the frigate had been a thing of beauty, but now, in the late afternoon sun she was more than that. She was alive. Her white sails billowed to catch every breath of breeze that stirred, and as she sped through the blue waters her keel seemed always

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on the verge of lifting into the air.

Thy were due east of Miami, Hank found, and not far from the Biminies. The hurricane had cleared shipping from the sea and it was not likely they would meet another ship before dark Then, if the wind held, they would be through the Providence before dawn and into the clear Atlantic. From there it would be south by south-east until they were through the Caicos.

Simon caught Hank's eye as it swept over the immaculate decks. "How does she strike you, our Baranca?"

"Well," Hank told him. He ordered the wheelman to hold the course steady and walked aft with Simon to a spot on the deck where they could be alone. Black John had gone forward.

The tall, swarthy pirate guessed correctly at what was in Hank's mind. "'Tis John you're concerned about, eh?"

At Hank's nod he shook his head. "No, he'll stick. But it's Peleg I fear. If we cross his path we're in for trouble."

"From the looks of our crew they'll do in a fight," Hank said. "And I'd wager the Baranca can sail a ring around any ship on the seas."

"Aye," Simon agreed. "But Peleg was Morgan's mate for ten years and there's not a trick he's forgot. And his ship's as good as ours."

But Hank was in no mood now for fears. The wind had strengthened off the land and the Baranca was like a great white bird skimming over the darkening waters. Night fell suddenly, and in the sky the Southern Cross wheeled up over the horizon. The moon turned the brass five pounders along the gunwales into flickering candles. It was hours before Hank could go below to his cabin to sleep.

What it was that awakened him Hank did not know. All at once his eyes were open and staring into the darkness of the cabin. He lay there, continuing to breathe steadily. Then he heard the sound. It came from a spot near the table under the lantern.

Slowly, with infinite care, Hank swung his legs off the bunk. He cursed to himself for not having found a weapon. But it was too late to think of that now.

There was another sound, this time closer. As it came again Hank leaned slightly forward and drew his legs under him so that his heels rested on the edge of the bunk and his weight was supported partly by his hands. He perched there like a condor preparing to take off.

IT WAS not pitch dark, and as Hank's eyes became accustomed to it he could see the vague shadow approaching. It moved slowly, stopping at each step. The man on the bunk forced himself to hold his breathing steady. At last the shadow was only a few feet away.

With all the power of his legs Morgan catapulted toward it. He felt his shoulder drive into the man's hard belly and heard the whoosh of breath in his ears. Together they plowed into the table and it was the intruder who was underneath as they hit the floor. But he recovered fast.

His knees came up against Morgan's chest even as they landed, and with a heave his assailant threw him over his head. The positions were reversed now, with Hank on the bottom. An iron hand clawed for his throat.

He felt, rather than saw, the other hand go up. Desperately he threw up his own hand to ward off the thrust of the knife and felt his fingers around a wrist. Slowly, by sheer power, he forced the knife arm back.

But the hand at his throat continued

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

its pressure, crushing Hank's windpipe. A roaring grew in his ears and he could feel the arm above him begin to descend. With all his remaining strength Morgan brought his knee up. There was a gasp of pain and the hand on his throat loosened.

Before the other could recover Hank was on his feet. He met the intruder's charge with a solid punch that stopped the man in his tracks. Hank followed it up with another to the pit of the stomach that drove the other back to the door of the cabin. Morgan started forward, then dropped flat as the thrown knife whizzed by his head.

By the time he picked himself off the floor the door had opened and shut again. The intruder, whoever he was, had gone. As Morgan flew up the companionway he heard above him the slap of naked feet on the deck. But when he reached the deck it was deserted except for the lookout and the man at the wheel. They had seen no one.

Below again, Hank lit the lantern. The knife still quivered in the wall above the bunk. But it was an ordinary seaman's knife. There was no way of identifying it. Morgan propped the table against the cabin door and went back to sleep.

When he came on deck in the morning he found that they had already cleared the Providence. They were still holding their course due east and Morgan let it stay that way until the late forenoon.

Black John was at the wheel when Morgan ordered it to starboard. They were still under a full spread and the canvas tilted dangerously close to the water as they swung over. But the enormous muscles held the wheel steady until the Baranca straightened again.

"Hold her as she goes," Morgan told the black bearded man.

"As she goes," Black John repeated.

Hank studied him. Could it have been he who had tried to kill him in his cabin? Hardly likely. Morgan remembered how easily his hand had gone around the intruder's wrist. This man's wrist was as thick as Morgan's forearm. And Black John was not the kind to strike in the dark. Nor would he be able to hold his anger in check for a better moment, once it was on him.

But he had to be sure. Morgan tried John's reaction. "Someone tried to kill me in my cabin during the night," he said casually.

FOR a moment Morgan thought the huge man would tear the wheel loose in his effort to hold back his anger. "A traitor!" Black John said at last. "I was afeard of that. Peleg's too sly a dog not to have planted one amongst us. But who?"

"Aye, who?" A voice from behind them made Morgan whirl.

It was Simon. He had come up soundlessly and had apparently heard the exchange between Morgan and Black John. The tall, swarthy pirate's face was drawn in thought and his eyes were narrowed.

"'Twill not take much searching, I think," Simon said at last. "None but a fool would kill the man on whom his life depends. And there are not many such fools aboard."

He turned and walked purposefully toward a group of men who were splicing rope. Morgan could see among them the man whose moustache he had severed, and the one with the scarf. They fanned out as Simon approached.

What Simon said Morgan could not hear as he started on a run toward them. But the man with the drooping moustache blanched suddenly and fell back.

His hand fell to the dagger at his

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

belt. "No!" he cried, his voice shrill with fear. "No! You don't dare!" His hand whipped the dagger from his belt and started it upward.

But Simon was faster. Like an uncoiling rattler he struck, and the cutlass was a blur of light as it whirled about his head. For an instant the other's body remained erect, then crumpled to the deck. The detached head rolled forward a few feet and stopped, an unseeing eye turned upward and still fixed in fear.

Morgan was surprised that he could look upon it with complete calm. But there was that in him now which accepted such things as normal. He was thinking now as another Morgan had thought.

"That was foolish," he said to Simon.

The swarthy man looked at him, surprise. "Aye? What made it so?"

"Peleg wouldn't have sent him if he were such a fool. Chances are that if he did, he sent another along with him. We might have trapped the other through this one if you hadn't killed him."

Comprehension came quickly to Simon. "Ah . . . I didn't think of that." He stared at Hank. "'Tis Henry Morgan's name you bear, and shiver my timbers if it isn't Morgan's head on your shoulders!"

"Well, it can't be undone," Hank told him. "And he deserved what he got." He turned to the group of silent men around them. "Toss him overboard!"

One of them lifted the head by the hair and heaved it over the side. The body followed swiftly, making a red spot for a moment in the boiling wake of the Baranca. As Morgan watched fins appeared on the surface. They knifed across the white foam, struck like bolts of lightning, and the body was gone.

Before Morgan had left the rail there came a cry from the crow's nest. "Sail ahoy! Sail to the larboard!"

MORGAN ran toward the wheel, where there was a spyglass, with Simon close on his heels. Behind them the men lined up at the railing, straining their eyes for a glimpse of that sail which was yet over the horizon for them.

Sweeping the horizon with the glass, Hank found it off the larboard bow. She was a frigate, he could see, much the same as the Baranca in appearance and similarly armed. Both carried twenty guns.

Simon took the glass from him. "Aye," he grunted. "'Tis Peleg and the Marianne. And by the looks of it, he's seen us."

Indeed, it seemed as though Simon was right. For the other ship had turned cross wind and was bearing toward the Baranca. Now Hank could see that the two ships were as twins, but the Baranca was the cleaner of the two.

"We'll stand and fight," he told Simon. "Sooner or later it would come to that. And now is the time, when a good wind gives the cleaner ship an advantage in speed."

From the wheel a roar of assent came from Black John. "But no cat or mouse!" he warned. "Bring it in close, so we can board her, and let me get my knife in Peleg's black heart!"

Simon silenced him. "No! 'Tis the treasure we want first, not Peleg! And a fight would gain us naught. If the Baranca is the fastest ship then I say, run! Run and scoop up the gold and let Peleg stew in his own gall!"

It was wise counsel, Hank realized. If they could beat Peleg and his crew to the island by so little as half a day there was a chance to get away with

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the gold. But in his heart there was a burning desire to come to grips with this man he had never met. For a minute he was torn by an inward struggle; then his head won over his heart.

"Hard to the starboard!" he shouted to the giant at the wheel.

There was a meeting of eyes between him and Black John, and he thought the order might be disobeyed. But he held his eyes steady, and suddenly the black bearded man was twirling the wheel in his huge hands. Hank felt a surge of elation. He was truly master of the Baranca now!

"The chart!" he ordered. Black John handed it to him without a word. Holding it up, Hank figured the distance yet remaining. If they had the advantage in speed which the Baranca's cleaner hull and sails indicated, they could gain the half day.

Slowly, the Marianne fell away to the larboard. Hank held the present course steady, watching the Marianne's topmast vanish little by little over the horizon.

When the Baranca had what he thought was a safe lead Hank swung her slowly back on course. Their goal was now south by south-west, and by nightfall they were cutting across the bow of the Marianne, but far to the south of her.

HANK slept little that night. Miami and the Dolphin were gone from his thoughts. What was a forty foot trawler to a ship like the Baranca? And how dull the security of an ocean freighter compared to the lure of Spanish gold! The twentieth century was a forgotten thing. A dream was coming true; Henry Morgan sailed the seas beneath the Jolly Roger!

Toward dawn he went below to catch a cat nap. But he was not to sleep for long. There was a loud hammering at the cabin door and he was instantly on his feet, wide awake.

"Who it it?" he called.

It was Quito, a Portugee who carried a three inch white scar on his shaven skull. "The water casks!" Quito panted. "She have been stave in!"

Before Hank could ask any further questions the Portugee was gone. Morgan got his shoes on and went topside. At the hatch to the forward hold he found the crew gathered. Without speaking he slid down the rope into the hold.

Simon, Black John, and a mulatto gunner named Isaac were already there, standing in two inches of water. In the flickering light of the lantern held by Simon, Morgan could see that every cask had been staved in.

"You were right, Morgan," Simon said bitterly. "There's another amongst us."

"And I was right!" Black John roared. He spewed curses. "Fight, I said! Now Peleg's got us where he wants us."

Morgan held up his hand. "Not yet. There'll be water on that island. And we'll have time to fill our casks."

"We'll have time enough so Peleg can catch us with half our men ashore and the Baranca with her sails furled!" Black John snarled. "I'm for a new captain!" He reached for the dagger in his belt.

But as he started forward his foot slipped in the water. Before he could regain his balance Morgan threw a punch that landed flush on the black whiskered jaw and sent him reeling back. His head struck one of the oaken kegs, and for a second he was dazed. In that brief instant Morgan twisted the dagger from his limp fingers.

Simon stared in astonishment as Morgan turned and sloshed away from Black John. "Best kill him," the tall

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pirate whispered to Hank. "Best do it now while you can. John is not the man to forget that blow."

"No," Hank told him. "I want to save that muscle. It may come to some good use yet."

Simon grunted. "And about the water? Unless we can gain more time, I fear John was right. Peleg will catch us with our sails reefed."

"No, he won't," Hank said. "Because we're not going to stop for water!"

"'Sdeath, man! Not stop for water! I know in truth there's none to be had within a hundred leagues around. We'd die of thirst! 'Tis walk the plank or be keel hauled, as I see it. And I'd sooner walk the plank! If die I must, then I'd rather die with a knife in my throat than to go mad and drink my own blood. I've seen that in my day too!"

"Don't worry," Hank told him. "We'll not die of thirst. I've thought of a way."

"And what might it be?" Simon demanded.

"I'll tell you when it's time. Now, we'd better set to work and scoop up as much of this water as we can. Boiled, it will be safe enough and will hold us until we can get fresh."

THEY set half the crew to work at once. Most of the water had drained away and a good deal of what was left was not usable. Still, enough was salvaged to last two days on rations. Hank put the rum under lock and key, knowing that liquor would only make the men thirstier.

When they were finished with that job, Hank was ready to work on his scheme. He got a huge square of canvas, several lengths of wood, tools, and rope from the ship's carpenter. Then he took the materials down to his cabin, leaving the men mystified.

All through the day and through most of the night he worked, coming up only to see that they were still on course. Toward morning they entered the Caicos group and began to pick their way through the numerous bays that lay between them and the Turks Islands.

When he came on deck Hank found Black John at the wheel again. The giant stared at him without speaking for a moment.

"Another man'd have killed me," he said at last.

"I'll leave that to Peleg, if he ever gets his hands on you," Hank grinned. "Now give me that description of the island you spoke about. We're almost within hailing distance of it now."

Black John nodded. "Aye. 'Tis a smallish one, mostly scrubby grass and bushes. Coming on it from the east we'll see a cove that's shaped like a fish's head. Shark's Cay, Peleg called it. And there's a tall palm that stands just where the eye should be."

"Good," Hank grunted. "We should have no trouble finding it if the map is correct." He turned and started away but the black bearded man grabbed his arm. Even without exerting his strength, Black John's grip was like a vise. Hank realized how lucky he'd been when the big man's foot had slipped.

"Watch out!" Black John whispered hoarsely in Hank's ear. "Peleg's a sly one. And we're not through with his tricks, if I know him rightly. If he catches us with our anchor dragging we're done for."

"I've got a trick of my own," Hank assured him. It was plain to him how Peleg had planned the thing. The time gained by the Baranca would be used to fill the repaired casks. Since the ship would have to be brought close inshore, Peleg would catch her like a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sitting duck, with her anchor down, unable to maneuver and only half manned.

He called down the lookout and gave him the description of Shark's Cay. While the men broke out the small arms and muskets and got a longboat ready Hank went below again to complete his work.

Just as he put the finishing touches to it there came a roar from above. Dragging the bulky contraption behind him, Hank made his way to the deck. The men were milling at the rail, eager at sight of the island.

It was exactly as Black John had described it and Hank could see why it had been chosen. Almost the color of the sea it was, its growth scraggly and dried to a dull grayish green. Except that the cove offered some protection from the sea, because of the jagged rocks on both sides which gave it its name, the cay was a lonely, deserted place where no one was likely to venture.

SIMON was calling orders to the crew as Black John brought the Baranca close to shore. The water here was clear and deep, Hank was glad to see. As he watched, the men under Simon's direction swarmed aloft and made ready to haul down the sails.

"Hold on!" Morgan yelled. Simon turned toward him in astonishment.

"Are you daft, Morgan?" he demanded. "With half the men ashore, the rest couldn't handle her with all her canvas out. And what the hell is it you've got with you there?"

"A sea anchor," Hank told him. It was a huge cone of canvas, held open at the mouth by wood crossbars. Lengths of anchor hawser dangled from it.

Seeing that Simon still did not catch on, Hank explained. "We can't drop anchor because then we'd have to furl the sails so's not to snap the hawser. But I figure we can use this sea anchor to act as a drag. That way we can keep full sail up and be ready to go at a moment's notice by merely cutting the cable."

The men were looking at him with open mouthed admiration. "I never heard the likes of it!" Black John grinned. "And if we get the digging over with in a hurry we can be ready and waiting for Peleg when he shows up!"

"But how about the water?" Simon insisted.

"We'll get that from Peleg," Hank told him. "He wants that gold, and if he can't take us by surprise he'll have to fight us in the open. And we can beat him at that!"

He looked around him. "Now move! I think Peleg won't give us as much time as we expected. We'll have to be aboard in two hours if we want to be ready for him."

Quickly, while he and Black John rigged up the sea anchor, the longboat was lowered and a score of picks and spades loaded aboard. As the anchor took hold and brought the Baranca into the wind they dropped into the longboat with Simon and some seventeen others. Only fifteen men remained aboard the frigate.

As soon as the longboat hit the beach Hank was over the side. "On the double quick!" he snapped.

As the men followed him and dragged the boat up on the beach and unloaded the tools Hank turned to Black John. "The map of the island," he said.

The black bearded man hauled it out from under his shirt and handed it over. It was simple, showing a clear trail from the palm in the cove to a great boulder that reared up near the center of the island. They headed that way at a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dog trot, Black John carrying twice his share of the equipment.

Forty paces north of the boulder and twenty paces east of it they started digging. The ground here was perfect for the purpose of burial, being very sandy and loosely packed so that it would not retain moisture which might rot the wooden chests.

The first two excavations yielded nothing. Then Hank broke them into four groups of five and started them working in from the edge of a rough circle he drew in the sand. Most of the men worked in a frenzy, the sweat running down their bare backs.

IT WAS Isaac, the big mulatto, who struck pay dirt. With a bellow which could have been heard all the way to the ship he announced his discovery. Like a man possessed he dropped his spade and began grubbing in the sand with his bare hands, tearing it away from the hasp of the chest he had uncovered.

Black John leaped into the hole and pushed him away. With a heave that made the muscles of his back stand out like cables he tore the chest out of the sand. A single blow with a pick smashed the lock and knocked the top back. Animal noises came from his throat as he dipped his hands deep into the mass of glittering gold coins which was revealed.

The others would have joined him had not Morgan stopped them. "There must be more down there!" he yelled.

There were more. For two hours the men labored, and when they were through eighteen chests stood at the edge of the huge pit they had dug.

It was more than the loot of a ship or a fleet of ships; it was the loot of an empire, for Maracaibo had been the heart of the Spanish empire in the New World.

The men would have broken open all the chests had they not been restrained. But Morgan would not give them a chance to stop and think of the treasure that lay around them.

"Back to the ship!" he cried. "We've taken too long already. And if Peleg gets there before we're aboard, we'll all rot here with the treasure!"

The chests were all two-handled and they carried them between them, going single file, so that from above it would have looked like a string of dark stones moving along a light brown thread.

But the chests were heavy, and when they reached the longboat even Black John would have rested. Still, Morgan kept after them. A moment lost now might mean disaster.

Every man aboard with the exception of the lookout lent a hand, flinging down cables and swarming down the rope ladders. As the last chest came aboard there was a roar of "Break out the rum!" They seemed to have forgotten that finding the treasure and keeping were not the same thing.

It was the lookout who reminded them. "Sail ahoy!" he suddenly shouted down. They had not made it a moment too soon. Had they stopped for water they would have been trapped ashore.

"Secure the chests on deck!" Hank ordered. As the men stacked them around the masts and tied them, he ran to the stern and cut the Baranca free from the sea anchor with a cutlass.

The frigate leaped forward as though shot from a cannon. Although most of the men had not sailed together before they worked like a well oiled machine, the gunners dropping beside the cannon and the others forming crews behind them. Black John took the wheel.

The Marianne was coming in fast, trying to cut off the Baranca, trying

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to keep her bottled inside the cove where she would not have room to maneuver. But she was not fast enough. The minutes Morgan had saved were life itself now.

THEY caught Peleg off guard. He had expected them to react sluggishly, and now he could not change course swiftly enough. As she skimmed from the cove the Baranca cut squarely across the bow of the Marianne, only a hundred yards from her.

"Aim for the rigging!" Hank shouted behind the gunners. They were using ball, and as the air cleared of smoke he saw great rents in the topmast and the mizzen.

The maneuver had been highly successful, slowing the Marianne considerably. But he was up against a master, Hank found. Despite her advantage in speed the Baranca could not repeat.

He had seen several men plummet from the rigging of Peleg's ship at that first volley. But even with a probable edge in manpower Hank would not close with him. Instead, he drew the Marianne out after him, giving them shot after shot only to slip out of reach each time.

Black John turned over the wheel to someone else and came up behind Hank. "Enough of this!" he cried. "We'll be at it till nightfall. And then Peleg will hold off until morning and harry us again. He knows we're out of water and can't leave the cay."

He was right, of course. And the longer the men went without water the easier it would become for Peleg. If the master of the Marianne wished to he could have refused to fire at all, knowing that eventually Morgan would have to come after him.

But Hank had seen how the pirates in his crew reacted to the sight of gold and he knew that Peleg was so set after the treasure that he was overanxious. And there was a traitor aboard the Baranca. That too made Peleg bolder than he should have been.

And on that Morgan gambled. "You're right," he told Black John. "But the waiting's over. I think Peleg is ripe for the trap I've laid. Have the men load with grape and tell them to hold their fire until I give the order."

Four times now the Baranca had let the Marianne come at her broadside. And each time, at the last moment, Morgan had run to the starboard. Peleg would be expecting him to do the same this time.

As she turned cross wind the Baranca's sails emptied for a moment and she slowed. Again Peleg came in cross her bow. But this time the Baranca did not run.

Almost on her beam from the sudden twirl of the wheel, the frigate swung to the larboard. It slowed her down still further, but for a moment she had caught the Marianne off guard and was coming at her at an angle that allowed only half the starboard guns on Peleg's ship to bear on her while all her own guns were trained on the foe.

"Fire!" Morgan roared. At a distance of only a hundred yards they could not miss and a withering hail of grape swept the Marianne's decks. The cries of the wounded came clearly across the narrow gap of water.

THE men were firing at will now as they closed in, and volley after volley thundered at the Marianne. Most of her guns were firing too, but Hank had expected they would be. The gunners were well protected. His aim had been to put as many of the others out of action as possible. For he had seen, at the first volley when they came out of the cove that the deck of the Marianne swarmed with men.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hank's mind was on the present now; as the stretch of water between the two ships narrowed there were a thousand things to be done. Grappling hooks were prepared, muskets issued and loaded, the rigging held ready for instant release. And he ordered all those things with a fog of gunsmoke before his eyes and its acrid bite in his lungs as calmly as though he had done it a thousand times before.

A falling chunk of spar hit him a glancing blow on the side of the head that knocked him to his knees. But he was on his feet again as the ships came together with a jar and a screech of wood against wood.

The cannon were not firing now; every man who could stand was at the rail. As the ships touched, the grappling irons flew outward and bound them together. From both sides came a rain of musket balls, and then the guns were dropped.

There was no time to reload, and besides, they would be useless in the close fighting to come.

Every man on both ships was atop the rails now, except one. And that was Peleg. Hank could see him on the fo'csle, a huge, one-eyed figure with a black patch over his blind eye. He was bellowing orders through cupped hands.

Hank felt a clutch at his shoulder. It was Black John. "Peleg is mine," he said in Hank's ear. Morgan nodded.

As he swung onto the rail with the aid of a trailing rope, Hank saw that the decks of the Marianne were red with blood. But she must have had a crew of seventy at the start for fully forty of them met the men of the Barranca.

For a tense minute the choice of the battleground hung in the balance. Then slowly but surely Morgan's men drove them back and down onto the deck of the Marianne.

The battle broke into a score of individual fights. Around Morgan men slashed at each other with knife and cutlass; he himself used a musket as a flail, cutting a swath about him.

A pain-maddened pirate with blood flowing from the stump of an arm charged at him with a pike. Hank sidestepped neatly and brought the musket stock across the back of the man's neck as he charged past.

But the stock splintered with the force of the blow, and as Morgan turned, he slipped in the gore and fell to his knees. When he got up he held only the long barrel of the musket.

Before he had a chance to find another weapon, a second of Peleg's men was on him with a cutlass. It was an uneven fight with certain death at the end of it for Hank. But the pirate was too anxious; thinking he had a quick kill, he raised the cutlass over his head with both hands and brought it down in a sweep that would have split Hank from head to foot.

WITH a sureness that was instinctive Hank switched the gun barrel from his right hand to his left at the same instant that he swayed to his right. The barrel of the musket hit the descending cutlass just hard enough to deflect it.

The next moment the cutlass was driving into the deck, the pirate off balance and unable to let go quickly enough. Again the barrel changed hands, and Hank brought it around with crushing force to land at the base of his opponent's skull.

But his men had not been as successful as he! As Morgan whirled about he saw that the battle had entered a new phase. The crew of the Marianne was formed in a solid wedge that slowly and surely was cutting a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

swath of death through the scattered and disorganized men of the Baranca.

Almost directly above them Hank saw the gigantic figures of Peleg and Black John locked in hand to hand combat on the fo'csle deck. Even as Morgan watched, the black bearded man drove his fist into Peleg's neck and followed it with a kick that must have shattered most of the one eyed pirate's ribs. In return, Black John received a bone splintering smash in the face and a kick in the pit of his stomach.

But it was Peleg's last flurry. He was bleeding from his nose and mouth, and now a savage blow to his forehead opened a gash and sent a cascade of gore into his good eye. Blinded and bellowing like a mad bull he fell before Black John's thunderous blows.

With a yell of triumph Black John seized Peleg, one hand at his throat and the other at his belt, and lifted him above his head.

Morgan's shout cut through the noise and confusion. "John!" he was calling. The bearded giant froze like a statue, then turned, Peleg still above his head, to see what Morgan wanted.

"Down there!" Hank yelled. He pointed toward the wedge of men which was moving out from beneath the bridge.

A smile spread over Black John's face as he saw what Morgan wanted. Then he leaned forward and dropped Peleg's body upon them. It landed square in the center, pinning several men beneath it and scattering the others like tenpins. The fight was almost over.

But not for Morgan. A warning signal flashed in his brain, and although he had heard nothing he suddenly whirled. There was a man behind him; a man about whose head a cutlass whirred. Simon!

He was babbling as he came toward Morgan, the light of madness in his eyes. "Damn you, Morgan!" he was shouting, "I'd have had half the treasure if not for you!"

Even as he parried Simon's first thrust Hank's mind raced. So Simon was the traitor! Now Hank knew why the swarthy pirate had been so quick to kill his slower thinking aide. Now he knew what the man had meant when he cried, "You wouldn't dare!"

BUT there was no time to think now. The cutlass in Simon's hand was like a snake's tongue, darting in and out at Hank. The pirate was a master of the weapon, and little by little Morgan was forced backward until he stood pinned against the base of the mainmast.

Cutting and slashing at Morgan, Simon drove closer. He was raving now. "I'll have your heart and the treasure too!" he taunted. The cutlass slashed across Hank's chest, sliced through his shirt, and left a thin red trail.

Simon was playing with Morgan like a cat with a mouse. His strokes came through like lightning, too fast to parry. Hank saw that it was only a matter of minutes. Unless . . .

It was a chance in a million. If Hank lost he would be unarmed. But his cutlass was of no more use against Simon than if it had been made of putty. He waited until he saw an opening, a split second when Simon's arm was drawn back for another thrust.

Then Morgan acted. With a yell he threw his weapon straight at Simon's face! The pirate did not even blink. His own cutlass swept up to knock Hank's aside, then came down into position again.

Too late! Hank had followed up his throw, and now as Simon's blade came down he was under it. Morgan's hands locked around Simon's knees and he

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

heaved the swarthy man over backward.

They rolled on the bloody deck like brawling cats. Now one was on top, now the other. But always Hank's hand held Simon's wrist in a grip of steel and the pirate could not free his cutting arm. And slowly Hank's other hand came closer and closer to Simon's throat.

For a moment Hank thought he had it, then felt it slip through his wet fingers. He clawed upward, dug at Simon's eyes, and heard a shriek of pain. Then the grip on the cutlass relaxed and Simon brought his own right hand around in a swing that made Hank's head swim.

They were both unarmed now. And with bare fists Morgan was the better man. He let Simon get to his feet, then rushed him. Morgan's fist drummed against the swarthy man's chest, driving him backward.

In Morgan's ears Simon's breath sounded rasping and labored. Then there was a grunt as he drove his fist into Simon's stomach with the force of a pile driver. The blow slammed the swarthy man against the rail.

But Simon was not finished. Before Morgan could follow up his advantage, Simon had clambered up onto the rail and was running toward the stern. Hank tore after him, gaining at every step.

As he pulled even with the man above him Hank leaped upward and grabbed for Simon's ankle. He missed, but the results were better than he could have hoped. His hand struck Simon's heel and knocked him off balance.

FOR a few seconds the pirate whirled crazily, his hands clutching at air. Then he left the rail as though it were a diving board, his arms still flailing. And below him in the water the sharks were waiting, drawn to the ships by the smell of blood.

Morgan turned away with a shudder, and found a scene of carnage. Not a man of the Marianne's crew remained alive, and at least half the Baranca's men lay dead and wounded.

Hank gave his crew no time to gloat over their victory. Dividing the able bodied survivors into two crews, he sent one below to bring up the water casks while the other set to work bandaging the wounded and carrying them aboard the Baranca. He himself stacked the powder kegs in the hold and ran a fuse up to the deck.

In an hour it was done, the last man and the last water cask aboard the Baranca. "Loose the irons!" Morgan called. As the last grapple hook was cast off he lit the fuse and ran. Willing hands caught him as he leaped the gap between the two drifting vessels.

They were only a hundred yards away when the powder in the Marianne's hold exploded. First the ship quivered, the mainmast rising out of the deck and falling back again broken in two, and then came sheets of flame from the portholes and up the companionway. There was a dull, angry roar as the Marianne split and settled lazily in the water, burning as she sank.

Black John was chuckling crazily in Hank's ear. "That's the last of them," he laughed. "The last of Peleg and Simon. Aye, and a good share of our men too, Morgan."

There was something suggestive in his tone and Hank looked at him. His face was smeared with blood and more blood trickled from a spot on his chin where a clump of beard had been torn out. And his eyes had the same glint as when he had lifted the treasure chest from the ground.

He thumped Morgan on the back. "All to the good, Morgan," he chuckled.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The less men, the more loot for each of us. Let's divvy it up now!"

Behind him the other survivors took up the cry. "Now! Divvy up now!"

Hank saw that he could not stop them. They were mad with blood and gold, oblivious of the fact that their voyage was only half over.

"All right!" he shouted above the uproar. He strode to the mast and slashed the rope which held the treasure chests bound to it. Then he turned and faced them.

"We'll split right here on deck. Equal shares to all. First we take the coin and then we'll decide what to do with the plate."

Before he had finished speaking Black John was working on the hasps with a marlinspike. As each lock was torn loose and the contents of the chest revealed, a fresh roar went up from the men.

MORGAN was thankful that the treasure was mostly in coin. It would be easier to divide that way and less danger of squabbles. He and Black John poured the gold onto the deck and set to work sorting and arranging it into equal piles, the doubloons on one side and the pieces of eight on the other.

There was one piece of eight left over and Black John handed it to Hank with a bow. "All overs to the captain," he laughed. The crew sent up a cheer as Hank put the coin in his pocket.

They lined up like starving men in a breadline, their eyes wild and staring at the gold which would make every man rich. Even the lookout had left his crow's nest, fearful that he would lose his share if he remained aloft.

And with no one on watch, the dark clouds piled up unnoticed on the horizon. There was a strange calm over the water and an electric tension, but that too went unfelt. It was only when the wind sprang up again, rising to an ominous gale, that they knew the danger. Hank saw it first.

"Hurricane!" he shouted. "Haul in the sail!"

The men started to run, and for a moment Hank thought they would make it in time. Then someone remembered the gold, still piled on the deck.

"The gold!" the pirate screamed. "We'll lose the gold!' He turned back and flung himself on the glittering heaps.

In an instant there was a mass of struggling men on the deck. Each was afraid that he would lose his share if someone else got to it first. Unmindful of the growing darkness, of the mass of black clouds and the wall of water racing toward them, they rolled on the deck in an insane struggle for the gold.

Only Hank kept his head, and there was nothing he could do. He tried to head the Baranca into the wind, but it was no use; struggle as he would, he could not turn the ship. At the last possible moment he left the wheel and dived for the shelter of the gunwale and a grip on a ringbolt.

The ringbolt was all that saved him. For that first wave was as though the sea had been lifted up and poured over the Baranca. Tons of water battered Morgan and left him gasping for breath.

And when the water was gone there was the wind. It had risen to an unearthly, deafening shriek. Before Morgan's eyes it tore the masts from the deck and carried them off, stripped of sails and rigging.

SOMETHING crashed and splintered near Morgan's head. He twisted about, still clutching the ringbolt, and saw the remains of one of the treasure chests. Here and there along the rail

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gold coins lay, and an occasional crumpled bit of plate.

The darkness was broken again by flashes of lightning, and Hank looked about to see if any of the men were still alive. But the only things which looked as though they had once been men were twisted, bulky shapes which lay smashed against the forward rail.

Then another wave came, and another; and when they had gone, the deck was washed clear of the twisted shapes. It was then that he saw Black John.

The black bearded giant had been lying behind the stump of the foremast, his hands locked around it to keep himself from being washed overboard. Now he was on his feet, walking toward Morgan, leaning all the way into the gale in order to keep his balance.

And he was bellowing at the top of his lungs. Even over the howl of the wind his voice carried to Morgan. "Gold!" he was shouting. "Gold!"

He kept coming toward Hank, and the man at the ringbolt felt a chill of fear. There was no question that Black John was completely mad, and in his madness he might tear Hank away from his one-grip-on-life.

The huge pirate was only a few yards from Morgan when Hank saw something else. Black John was blind! He kept clutching at the air as he came, and when lightning flashed frighteningly close he did not even blink.

That was the way Hank saw him last, the great hands reaching for unseen gold, the mad cry for gold carrying over the storm. Then the wave struck, an avalanche of water that buried the Baranca and swept away the giant as though he were a matchstick.

Hank held his breath desperately, wondering if the ship would ever rise again. But the hatches were all battened, and without her spars the Baranca was like a great, hollow cask that bobbed up and down on the mountainous seas. And the wind drove her northward at a pace faster than she had ever gone under a full spread of sail.

Morgan had no idea how long the hurricane lasted. His body felt as though it were being pounded with mallets, and his head was full of the unearthly roar of the wind. More than half the time he was not conscious. But in the other half he did the thing which saved his life. Somehow, hardly knowing what he did, he pulled his leather belt from around his waist and lashed himself to the ringbolt with it.

He could not tell when night and morning came, for the blackness remained the same. It was after one of his spells of unconsciousness that he saw the first glimmer of light. The storm should have been over hours before; it would have passed over if he were on land, but as it was, the Baranca travelled with it.

THE wind was not so strong now, and from the way the rain fell in steady sheets Morgan could tell that the center of the hurricane had passed. With painful slowness he unfastened the belt and lifted himself to his feet.

Holding fast to the rail, he made his way forward. There was nothing to impede his progress, not even wreckage. The wheel was gone and the ship drifted with the wind. Without a compass Morgan could not tell where he was, but he knew they had traveled far.

Suddenly there was the roar of surf above the wind. Hank knew then that the Baranca was doomed. It was only a question of minutes before the waves drove her up on the shore.

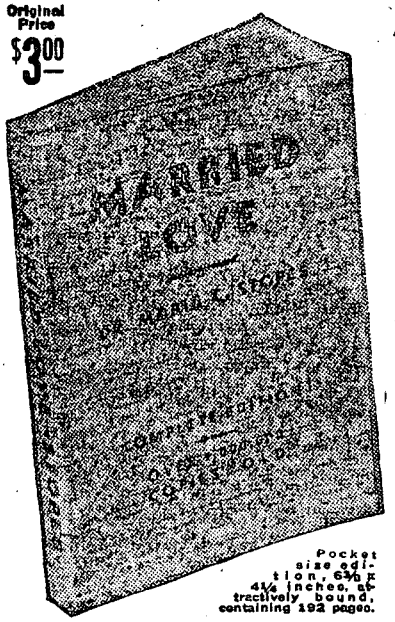
Climbing up to the prow, he gripped the rail with one hand and shaded his eyes from the rain and spray with the

*(Continued on page 170)*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# Now Only 25¢

Original Price $3.00




Pocket size edition, 6¾ x 4¼ inches, attractively bound, containing 192 pages.

## "MARRIED LOVE"

### A Solution of Intimate Sex Difficulties by Dr. Marie Stopes

This famous marriage guide has helped countless men and women achieve an undreamed of happiness, brought them real "wedded bliss." Here, in simple language and with remarkable frankness, Dr. Stopes explains the intimate and vital details of wedded life.

Point by point, and just as plainly as she would tell you in a private consultation, the author takes up each of the many problems that are bound to arise in every marriage. To prevent disillusionment and even despair, every bride and groom should read this book. The author tells exactly what should be done to insure the contentment not only of the wife, but of the husband! She writes directly, clearly, concretely, explaining step by step every procedure in proper sex relations.

### KNOWLEDGE FOR HAPPINESS

This book is also invaluable for those who have been married for many years, for it contains revealing, important facts of which many people are unaware. Thousands of marriages end in misery and divorce because so many married people are ignorant of the art of love. Is your marriage on the brink of ruin? Do you search for the joy of a perfect union?

Now YOU can change despair into heavenly happiness—if you know the intimate secrets of marriage. Start today to achieve a rich, harmonious wedded life.

### NOW ONLY 25c

Men and women by the thousands eagerly paid the original published price of $3.00 a copy. The enormous sale made possible a $2.00 edition—and thousands more purchased this "marriage saver." Now, to make it available to the largest possible audience, the publishers have issued a limited quantity of a handsome, pocket-size edition for only 25c! The contents are exactly the same. A new world of happiness may be in store for you. A new dawn of joy and health and energy—and the success that comes with them.

### LIMITED TIME OFFER

Send in your order at once to be sure to secure this world-famous work dealing with the intimate contacts of love in marriage. Take advantage of this sensational, limited time offer made to the readers of this magazine to secure a copy of "MARRIED LOVE" at this remarkably low price of only 25c. You must read this valuable book to understand why over 1,000,000 copies have been sold in Europe and America.

The sale of this book is restricted to persons either married or contemplating marriage. CLIP THE COUPON AND MAIL IT TOGETHER WITH YOUR REMITTANCE TODAY!

### Partial Contents

- The structure and mutual adjustment of the male and female systems.
- Fundamental facts concerning coitus.
- Ignorance of the bride and unwise actions of the groom.
- Regulation of coitus in marriage.
- What a wife must do to bring her husband's sexual desires into harmony with her own.
- Charts showing periodicity of natural desire in women.
- Proper positions for coitus.
- The marital rights of the husband.
- Problems of childless unions.
- The intimate physical contacts of love in marriage.
- Surest way to prepare wife for coitus.
- Causes for unhappiness in marriage.
- The problem of the strong-sexed husband and the weak-sexed wife.
- Frequency of conjugal relations.
- Sleeplessness from unsatisfied sex needs.
- Pregnancy and conjugal relations.
- The art of love.

EUGENICS PUB. CO., Dept. M-38
372 West 35th St., New York 1, N. Y.

Enclosed is my remittance for 25c plus 10c to cover packaging and delivery charges for which please send me in plain wrapper—all charges prepaid—one copy of the special American, pocket-size edition of Dr. Marie Stopes' famous book, "MARRIED LOVE."

Name ..... AGE.....
(Be sure to state age)

Address ..... Zone....

City ..... State.....

☐ We have just published a detailed manual of the human anatomy. This "Human Atlas" contains 45 graphic illustrations of the human body with explanatory text for each illustration written in simple, clear language. The price of this new book is $1.00. If wanted, check square and add $1.00 to your remittance.


PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# READER'S PAGE

## THE BEST IN FIFTEEN YEARS

Sirs:

Have just finished reading your March issue and I want to be among the first to tell you that in "Forever Is Too Long" you have one of the best yarns ever to hit the printed page in all the time I have been a follower of stf. (Fifteen years.)

I really admired the way Chet Geier handled the plot. Of course, we've all read similar stories, and some of them were pretty good—but this time we have the pleasure of reading one in a million and I doubt that you'll get one letter to the contrary. And if you do it will be from someone who would be better off dead.

I'd also like to add that I think you have a top-notcher in Charles Myers. Does he, by chance, drink the same brand of hooch as did Thorne Smith? If not, he certainly has the same brand of humor as did Smitty, and I hope to see a lot more of his work in the future.

But above all, give Chet Geier another shot in the arm or something, and get him to do something else even half as good as "Forever Is Too Long" and I will be a *Fantastic* fan forever. . .

Robert R. DeSaumerez,
6317 East First St.,
McLaughlin Heights,
Vancouver, Wash.

*Chet will be mighty glad to hear that you liked his story so well—as were we. But we don't have to give him a shot in the arm, as Chet has a number of great stories coming up in future issues. And, along this line, incidentally, watch the coming issues of our big sister magazine, Amazing Stories, for a book-length novel by Geier that we guarantee will really have you drooling. . .*

*As to Mr. Myers, we can't say what brand of "hooch" he drinks—if any, but we can say that he does write one of the most entertaining stories we've ever read—and you can rest assured we'll keep after him for further "Toffee" adventures. We can promise you that.....Ed.*

## COULDN'T PUT IT DOWN

Sirs:

I have just finished reading the March issue of FA and I found Geier's story, "Forever Is Too Long," the most fascinating story of all. The illustrations were also very good, as was the cover.

"You Can't Scare Me" and "Man of Two Worlds" took second place, and, as I said, the illustrations were excellent. "Hickson's Strange Adventure" was intriguing and absorbing. The other stories were also good. In fact, the book as a whole was so interesting that I did not lay it down until I had completely finished it.

I sincerely hope that all future issues of FA will be as interesting as this one.

Mrs. Claudette Scanlan,
124 Elmwood Ave.,
Newark, Ohio.

*We can promise you that all future issues of FA will not only be as good—but better.....Ed.*

## THOUGHT TELEPATHY

Sirs:

It has been three years since I wrote you, after receiving my first FA, and I haven't missed one since that time. What I'm writing about is the feature story, "Forever Is Too Long." Of course, I liked it tremendously, but more so, the idea of thought telepathy has always been a secret hobby of mine. Reading the story brought to my mind an incident that occurred a few years back. My brother had a letter from an Aunt, saying that she would visit them on a certain date. My brother's wife had never met this Aunt, and she was to meet her at the station. At breakfast on the morning she was to meet her, she said to my brother: "Frank, I dreamed of Aunt M— last night."

Then she told him how Aunt M— looked, and described how she was dressed. After my brother came home that evening, his Aunt told him *she* had dreamed of *his* wife, and knew just what kind of dress she would wear at the station—where they both recognized each other immediately!

It is because of things like this that I sometimes wonder if thought telepathy as Mr. Geier states in his story, isn't as far fetched as we might possibly imagine.

Pearl L. Moon, . .
852 Washington Ave.,
Ft. Myers, Fla.

*Along these lines, Miss Moon, may we suggest that you read our sister magazine, Amazing Stories, for further factual data on thought telepathy. This is quite an interesting subject, which we could talk about for hours—but all we'll say here is that maybe Chet Geier's "Muties" aren't so far fetched either ..... Ed.*

## CALLING LIN CARTER

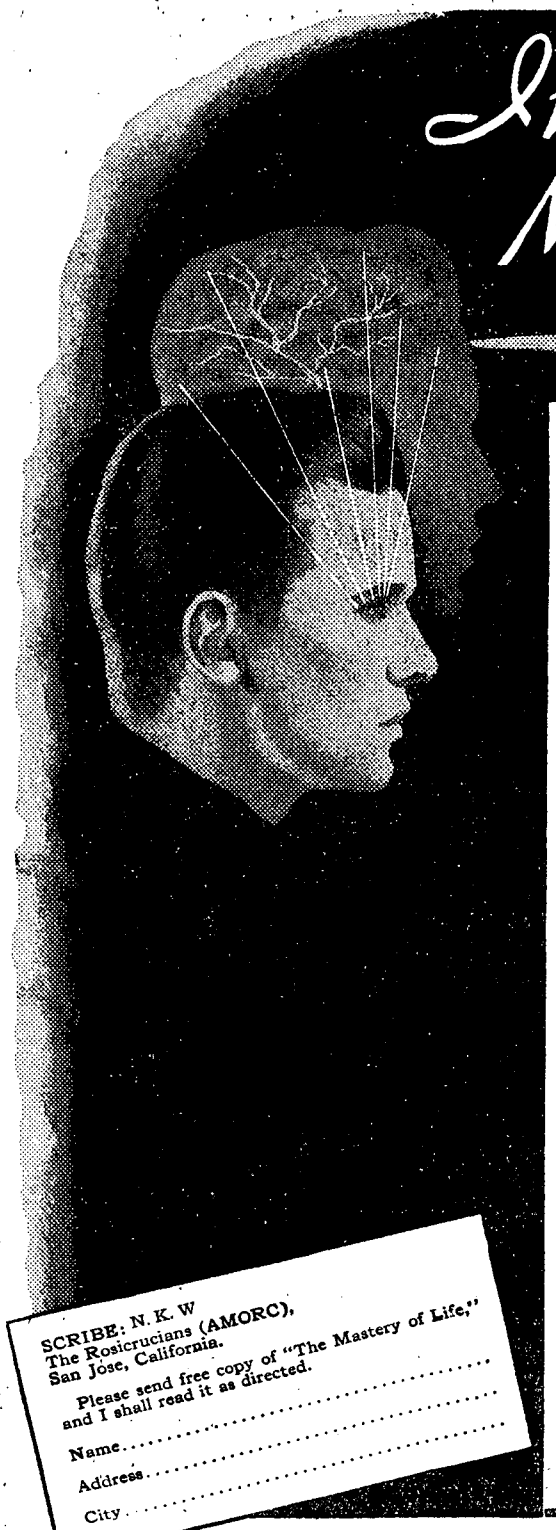
Sirs:

In regards to the first letter on the reader's page

*(Continued on page 176)*



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



# In Your Mind's Eye

## The Secret of MENTAL CREATING

IF you just like to dream, read no further. There comes a time when your fancies *must be* brought into light—and stand the test of every-day, hard realities. Are you one of the thousands—perhaps millions—whose thoughts never get beyond the stage of *wistful wishing*? Do you often come to from a daydream with the sigh, "If only I could bring it about—*make it real?*"

All things begin with thought—it is what follows that may take your life out of the class of those who hope and dream. Thought energy, like anything else, can be dissipated—or it can be made to produce actual effects. *If you know how to place your thoughts* you can stimulate the creative processes within your mind—through them you can assemble things and conditions of your world into a happy life of accomplishment. *Mental creating* does not depend upon a magical process. It consists of *knowing how* to marshal your thoughts into a power that draws, compels and organizes your experiences into a worth-while design of living.

## ACCEPT THIS *Free* BOOK

Let the Rosicrucians tell you how you may accomplish these things. The Rosicrucians (not a religious organization), a world-wide philosophical fraternity, have preserved for centuries the ancients' masterful knowledge of the functioning of the inner mind of man. They have taught men and women how to use this knowledge to *recreate their lives.* They offer you a free copy of the fascinating book, "The Mastery of Life." It tells how you may receive this information for study and use. Use coupon opposite.

SCRIBE: N. K. W
The Rosicrucians (AMORC),
San Jose, California.

Please send free copy of "The Mastery of Life," and I shall read it as directed.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....

*The* **ROSICRUCIANS**
**(AMORC)**
**SAN JOSE CALIFORNIA**


PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*Two Action-Packed Mysteries!*

THE PIGSKIN BAG
By BRUNO FISCHER

Intense drama in story of Adam Breen who becomes involved with "hot car" hoodlums $2.50

BLOOD ON BISCAYNE BAY
By BRETT HALLIDAY

Latest Michael Shayne mystery. Plenty of fast and tough action in this one $2.50

At your bookstore, or

ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY
185 N. Wabash Ave., Chicago 1, Ill.

DRAW for MONEY

BE AN ARTIST!
*Trained Artists are Capable of Earning $50, $60, $75 a Week*

It's pleasant and interesting to study Art the W.S.A. way. COMMERCIAL ART, DESIGNING, CARTOONING all in ONE complete home study course. No previous Art experience necessary—hundreds have profited by our practical methods since 1914. TWO ART OUTFITS furnished. Full information in FREE BOOK. "Art for Pleasure and Profit." Write today.
Course available under "G.I." Bill.

FREE BOOK gives details!

WASHINGTON SCHOOL OF ART,
Studio 925H, 1115 15th St., N. W.
Washington 5, D. C.
Name..... Age.....
Street .....
City..... Zone ( ) State.....
☐ I am entitled to training under the G. I. Bill.

SKIN SUFFERERS

For itching-burning of ECZEMA, PSORIASIS, ATHLETE'S FOOT, PIMPLES, RASH externally caused. Users highly praise fast-acting LUMCO, many say they are no more embarrassed by itchy blotchy skin. Rub LUMCO on at night, look for big improvement next morning, over 30 years success. Large jar $1.25. Special Double Strength for severe cases, quickens healing, large jar $2. Money refunded if not delighted. Sent p-paid or COD plus postage.

LUMCO PRODUCTS Dept. 401 KIMBALL, NEBR.

High School Course at Home
Many Finish in 2 Years

Go as rapidly as your time and abilities permit. Course equivalent to resident school work—prepares for college entrance exams. Standard H. S. texts supplied. Diploma. Credit for H. S. subjects already completed. Single subjects if desired. High school education is very important for advancement in business and industry and socially. Don't be handicapped all your life. Be a High School graduate. Start your training now. Free Bulletin on request. No obligation.

American School, Dept. H-482 Drexel at 58th, Chicago 37

ILLUSTRATED COMIC BOOKLETS
*THE KIND MEN LIKE!*
(VEST POCKET SIZE)

They are loaded with rare cartoons. Full of Fun and Humor. *20 DIFFERENT* booklets sent prepaid for $1 in plain wrapper.
GRAYKO, Dept. AB-3
Box 520, G. P. O., New York 1

*(Continued from page 166)*

other, while he tried to peer ahead. But he could see nothing.

He was standing there when the ship struck. There was a sudden jarring crash, and Hank felt himself leave the ship and sail forward into the air, his arms and legs moving in a frenzied dog-paddle. When he landed, it was in something hard, yet so soft that he seemed to be burrowing deep into it, and it was warm and very dark. . . .

The sun was burning through his eyelids and into his brain, it seemed to Hank. He heard groans, and only after he opened his eyes did he realize they came from him. But he was not hurt; the groans were for the terrible dream he had gone through.

The air was warm and fresh, and as he sat up on the sand Hank saw the surf breaking on the beach in slow, lazy rollers. For a while he just sat and tried to get his bearings, looking about for a sign of the frigate. But there was no frigate, only a few scattered bits of wreckage.

Hank got to his feet, shaking his head all the while. It took him a minute or two to get his bearings, but when he turned around he saw the road behind him, and the clump of great palms where he had left his car.

He tried to remember what had happened but it was no use. The last thing that made any sense was the dark figure which had appeared before him. But even that didn't make sense. He had to give up, deciding that the figure must have been a chunk of wood sticking up out of the sand. And he had run into it and knocked himself out.

Hank looked around to see if he could find anything which might have been that large piece of wood, and couldn't find it. Well, the sand was always shifting here, and it was probably covered again. He remembered thinking

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the same thing as he walked toward the ghost ship.

The main thing right now was to get some hot coffee into himself and then get down to the wharves to see whether the Dolphin was still in one piece. Hank found his car and got inside and felt better when the motor turned over immediately.

THERE was a roadside stand where he could stop and get gas and coffee. While the attendant filled the tank, Morgan went inside and flopped down on a stool. The waitress came toward him, blond and flowzy.

"What'll you have?" she asked.

"Coffee," Morgan told her. "Just coffee. Hot and black."

She filled a cup from the big urn behind the counter and slid it down to him. Then she came over and watched him drink the steaming brew. He could tell she was figuring him out.

"Fishing boat?' she asked at last.

"Yeah," he grunted. "Charter. How can you tell?" He didn't mean to be sarcastic but he couldn't help it.

She didn't take it wrong. "I didn't mean your clothes. It's the look you guys get in your eyes after a hurricane. The worry about your boat, you know. If it's still in one piece or not."

The coffee burned Hank's mouth and he had to stop drinking for a minute. "I wish I knew," he told her. "I haven't seen it yet." He went back to the coffee.

She shook her head. "Me for dry land."

Hank grunted as he finished his coffee and got up. "You said it, sister." He fished in his pocket for a coin and threw it on the counter. "Keep the change," he said, turning to go.

"Hey!" she called after him. "What's you trying to do, slip me a beer check?"


**LOANS by MAIL**
**$50 to $300 IN A HURRY**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Salaried people, men or women, married or single loans on your own signature, or your own security. NO personal interview . . . NO co-signers needed. NO wage assignments. You mail the application to us . . . we mail the money to you.

| FOR A LOAN OF | YOU CAN REPAY MONTHLY IN 18 PAYMENTS | IN 12 PAYMENTS | IN 9 PAYMENTS | IN 6 PAYMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| $ 50 | —— | $ 5.03 | $ 6.43 | $ 9.24 |
| 100 | 8.40 | 10.07 | 12.87 | 18.48 |
| 150 | 12.60 | 15.10 | 19.30 | 27.73 |
| 200 | 16.75 | 20.09 | 25.68 | 36.91 |
| 250 | 20.85 | 25.02 | 32.02 | 46.05 |
| 300 | 24.93 | 29.94 | 38.33 | 55.17 |

The above payments made at regular monthly intervals will repay the entire loan and all charges in the time indicated. Charges are based on the monthly rate of three per cent on unpaid principal balances to $150.00 and two and one-half per cent on that portion of unpaid balances in excess of $150.00 but not exceeding $300.00. "Loans by Mail" may be repaid in larger amounts, more frequent payments or repaid in full at further savings to you.

**CONVENIENT**

Just write us how much money you need and how you wish to repay . . . there's no charge or obligation. Whatever your needs for cash now or in the future, write for your "Loans by Mail" plan, today.

MERCHANTS INVESTMENT CO.
819-R 1st Nat'l Bldg., Omaha, Nebr.

Without obligation, rush complete details and all papers necessary for a loan of $_____ to be repaid at $_____ on the _____ day of each month.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Occupation _____

Astounding new Jim Major Home Method teaches you to play guitar easily, quickly, without long hours practicing scales or exercises. *No musical knowledge necessary.* Play many popular songs, hymns in very short time. 30 lessons, complete course for only $1.69. EXTRA—BIG 53-SONG BOOK included without additional cost. Send no money . . . pay postman $1.69 plus postage. (Cash with order we pay postage.) Money back guarantee. Send today to Jim Major, Room 350-E, 230 East Ohio, Chicago 11, Ill.

**MAGIC VANISHING CARD**

Throw it into the air. It completely disappears. Reproduce it later from spectator's pocket. It amuses and confuses all. Easy to do, 25c with catalog of 300 Amazing Magic Tricks. The Magician, Dept. 10, 2463 Kensington Ave., Phila. 25, Pa.


PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MEN-Build a Wholesale Route
GET INTO A Big Pay Business

We Help You Establish a Steady Route of Dealer Customers

Make good weekly earnings selling stores our BIG line of 200 products—all daily necessities. Show merchants in your locality a sensational line of self-selling counter goods. Retail at 5c and 10c. You make up to 112% commission. No large capital required. Easy to Start!

A fortune spent for National Advertising has made our products known from coast to coast. Send for our booklet "Your Opportunity in a Wholesale Business of Your Own." It's FREE —no obligation. WRITE TODAY!

WORLD'S PRODUCTS CO., Dept. 28-N, Spencer, Ind.

I Guarantee Complete Satisfaction or Your MONEY BACK

Out-of-Pawn at LOW PRICES

Save money. Send for FREE List of Fine Diamonds. Wonderful values. Hundreds of Beautiful Gems.

Exquisite Settings

GENUINE DIAMONDS

Lloyd J. Butler, Pres.

Unredeemed loan pledges and big buying power enable us to offer Fine Diamonds at Prices far less than original cost. Sent you FREE for INSPECTION AND APPRAISAL. Write for FREE List.

PRUDENTIAL LOAN ASSOCIATION
133 N. Clark Street Dept. C-47 Chicago 2, Illinois

LAW...

STUDY AT HOME Legally trained men win higher positions and bigger success in business and public life. Greater opportunities now than ever before.

More Ability: More Prestige: More Money We guide you step by step. You can train at home during spare time. Degree of LL.B. We furnish all text material, including 14-volume Law Library. Low cost, easy terms. Get our valuable 48-page "Law Training for Leadership" and "Evidence" books FREE. Send NOW. G. I. APPROVED.

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY, 417 South Dearborn Street
A Correspondence Institution Dept. L-417 Chicago 5, Ill.

INVENTORS

Patent laws encourage the development of inventions. Our firm is registered to practice before the U. S. Patent Office. Write for further particulars as to patent protection and procedure and "Invention Record" form at once. No obligation.

McMORROW, BERMAN & DAVIDSON
Registered Patent Attorneys
186-F Victor Building Washington 1, D. C.

ILLUSTRATED COMICS BOOKLETS

Sell our ILLUSTRATED COMIC BOOKLETS and other NOVELTIES. Each booklet size 4½x2¾. We will send 25 assorted booklets prepaid upon receipt of $1.00 or 75 assorted booklets sent prepaid upon receipt of $2.00. Wholesale novelty price list sent with order only. No orders sent C.O.D. Send Cash or Money Order.

REPSAC SALES CO:
1 West 13th St., Dept. 40-B New York 11, N. Y.

LEG SUFFERERS

Why continue to suffer without attempting to do something? Write today for New Booklet—"THE LIEPE METHODS FOR HOME USE." It tells about Varicose Ulcers and Open Leg Sores. Liepe Methods used *while you walk*. More than 40 years of success. Praised and endorsed by multitudes.

FREE BOOKLET

LIEPE METHODS, 3284 N. Green Bay Ave., Dept. E-59, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

She flipped the coin at him and he caught it. It looked like brass but it was too heavy to be brass. And there was a figure eight stamped on it. A piece of eight!

His head whirled as he dug out another coin and gave it to her. Looking down at the golden coin in his hand, he saw where his shirt was slit open. And through the slit he could see a thin, red scar. Simon's work!

"It must be tough," she was saying. "One hurricane is bad enough, but two in five days. . . ."

"Two?" Hank blurted. Then the one he had weathered on the Baranca had been real!

"Yeah." She shook her head. "I don't see how you guys stand it. What's so wonderful about the sea?"

"You wouldn't understand. It's in my blood," said Henry Morgan.

THE END

## ANIMALS KNOW

★ By PETE BOGG ★

OF LATE years sub and supersonics, electromagnetics, radar and psychology have spotlighted the animal world, disclosing facts that throw new light on ancient nature puzzles. We learn with something of a shock that bats had personal radio before man even was, that rats are more intelligent about what they eat than we are. You may now, through recordings, compare the conversation and courtship of the mosquito with your own. Grave-faced professors pore over animal I.Q.'s from mouse to chimpanzee. And the discomforts of supersonic and radio waves to birds is being carefully studied.

This is only a beginning. There is much more to be found out and deeper secrets to be penetrated. It may well be that with modern precision methods, mechanical and psychological, the animal world will some day become a scientific proving-ground—as it has been for medicine and psychology—of more mysterious faculties shared by animal and man.

Any farmer who is close to his animals can tell you that "critters" know things he doesn't. Animals and birds can look beyond the range of our senses and see the shadow of coming events, as can only a gifted few of the humankind. They may also have that much touted (see AMAZING

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

STORIES) gift of racial memory. Some animal students think so. Doctor Straith-Gordon, traveler and archaeologist, said in his lectures that he was convinced from observations all over the world that primitive peoples and animals had racial memory of the Deluge imprinted in terror on their minds.

Be that as it may, have you ever watched a dog warily circling something that for your money wasn't there? Have you seen a cat, tail crooked, fur a'bristle, eyes intent on what to you was empty space? Or known a bird fly into a night-darkened house, not by misdirection, but drawn magnetically to the scene of approaching death? They know. A biologist once said to me that he thought the animal had a more valid if less extended perception of reality than ourselves because it sees the shadow of life beyond living. Algernon Blackwood used this idea in his most famous story, JOHN SILENCE.

From earliest times men have gone to birds and animals to find out which way the winds of Fate were blowing—a cold winter, a scarcity of food, a war to be won or lost. Observations on the flight of birds and the behavior of animals is one of the most ancient forms of divination. Equally old, and savagely cruel, were auguries from entrails quivering from the sacrificial knife. Mediaeval witches depended on cats as the Devil's confidants. And in pagan times, goat-footed Pan, who had the triple attributes of beast, man and god, ruled the secret world of nature, held it in balance until mysterious whispers sighed round the earth, "Great Pan is dead." Now, the world of man desires not balance but mastery of nature, and science searches for a super-key.

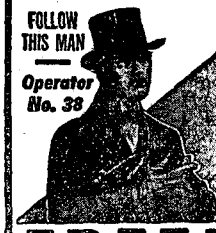
In the old legends animals not only understood human affairs, they magically communicated their wisdom in oracles from the gods. The most powerful and far-flung cult of antiquity was that of the bird-gods whose worship girdled the world. It was, according to legend, the birds divinely informed who taught man alphabet and number. Ibis-headed Thoth in Egypt, the quetzal bird in Mexico, the owl in Athens, Graeco-Roman Mercury whose winged cap and sandals proclaim his bird origin—and not forgetting the dove which has figured throughout the ages as the messenger of love carnal and divine. Today we still say "a little bird told me."

Scientists will tell you that while many marvelous abilities belong to the animal kingdom, animal foreknowledge is nine parts superstition and one part association with owners. But superstition is a word more convenient than accurate. Wild birds have no owners, and a dog will howl for calamity in the family down the street whom his owner doesn't know.

My expression, as Charles Fort would say, is that animals do have foreknowledge as a property of their magnetic constitution, which, I believe, is in resonance with subtle currents of psycho-somatic influence. Animals feel the lift and brightening of fortunate currents and dread the


The Steady Pay Profession
Good Times or Bad!

SCIENTIFIC CRIME DETECTION




It Is Easy to Learn!

I will teach you this fascinating science during your *spare time at home.* It pays to be an expert in Finger Printing, Firearms Identification, Police Photography and Criminal Investigation. I have trained hundreds of men and women now successfully serving in identification bureaus throughout America. You, too, may quickly prepare yourself to become a well-paid valued officer of the law, often sharing in the generous rewards offered for wanted criminals.

FREE!
"BLUE BOOK OF CRIME"
This book is full of exciting information on scientific crime detection. It will show how *You* can get started in a grand career. *Now,* at amazingly low cost. Clip coupon Now...Mail it today.

53 PER CENT
of all Identification Bureaus in the U. S. employ students and graduates of I. A. S. A majority of these men are heads of Bureaus. Many of them knew nothing about crime detection before training with me. Now they have steady jobs, good salaries and a fine future. Write today for full particulars and free book. Give age.

INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCE
1920 Sunnyside Ave., Dept. 4924 Chicago 40, Ill.

INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCE
1920 Sunnyside Ave., Dept. 4924, Chicago 40
Gentlemen: Without any obligation on my part, send me the "Blue Book of Crime," and complete list of Identification Bureaus employing your students or graduates, together with your low prices and Easy Terms Offer. (Literature will be sent ONLY to persons stating their age.)
Name..... Age.....
Address.....
RFD or Zone..... State.....

Now for EVERY WORK SHOP!
NEW Invention
Electroplates by BRUSH

Easy to Plate CHROMIUM, GOLD, SILVER, NICKEL, COPPER
. . . For Pleasure and Profit!
If you have a workshop—at home or in business—you need this new Warner Electroplater. At the stroke of an electrified brush, you can electroplate models and projects—you can replate worn articles, faucets, tools, fixtures, silverware, etc. with a durable, sparkling coat of metal . . . Gold, Silver, Chromium, Nickel, Copper or Cadmium. Method is easy, simple, quick. Everything furnished—equipment complete, ready for use. *By doing a bit of work for others, your machine can pay for itself within a week.* So make your shop complete by getting a Warner Electroplater right away. Send today for FREE SAMPLE and illustrated literature. ACT AT ONCE! *Mail Coupon.*
WARNER ELECTRIC CO., DEPT. M-21
1512 Jarvis Avenue, Chicago 26, Ill.

FREE Details & Sample!
WARNER ELECTRIC CO., 1512 Jarvis Avenue, Chicago 26, Dept. M-21
Gentlemen: Send Free Sample and Details to:
*Name*
*Address*
*City* *State*


PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CONFIDENTIAL LOAN SERVICE
Borrow $50 to $300.00
Need money? No matter where you live you can borrow BY MAIL $50.00 to $300.00 this easy quick *confidential* way.
BY MAIL
IT IS EASY TO BORROW BY MAIL! Completely confidential and private. Convenient Monthly Payments
NO ENDORSERS NEEDED
EMPLOYED MEN and women of good character can solve their money problems quickly and in privacy with loans MADE BY MAIL. No endorsers or co-signers. *We do not contact employers, friends or relatives.* Convenient monthly payments. Send us your name and address and we will mail application blank and complete details FREE in plain envelope. There is no obligation.
STATE FINANCE CO.
303 Marine Bldg., Dept. J-84, New Orleans 12, La.

GET THIS FINE SUIT NO MONEY TO PAY!
BIG CASH EARNINGS, TOO!
Big news! This fine tailored suit yours without paying one cent—and big cash earnings, too! It's easy! Just take a few orders. Earn up to $10 in a day and get your own suit as extra bonus. Dozens of rich new fabrics, superbly tailored in latest styles, at low prices produce orders on sight. Money-back guarantee.
FREE SAMPLES! Write today giving name, address, age, etc. for big complete outfit of actual samples and details of amazing new BONUS SUIT and money-making plan—All Sent Free! No experience. SEND NO MONEY!
W. Z. GIBSON, Inc. 500 S. Throop, Dept. S-577, Chicago 7, Ill.

THIS IS YOUR TEST!!!
Do you **desire** more abundant health? Do you feel that you are **capable** of securing greater income? Are you **limited** in your enjoyment of happiness? Do you earnestly desire to **expand** your capacities for receiving and holding? Read these words again, and **only** if you feel a **distinct, impelling urge** to do so, send your name and address to
THE "PRECEPTORS"
1317 N. Dewey St., Oklahoma City, Okla.

SONGWRITERS POEMS WANTED AT ONCE
Send Your Poems, Any Subject, for Immediate Examination and FREE BOOK: "YOUR FUTURE IN SONGWRITING."
RADIO CITY MUSIC ACADEMY
1674 Broadway New York 19, N. Y.

LAW
STUDY AT HOME for Personal Success and LARGER EARNINGS. 38 years expert instruction—over 108,000 students enrolled. LL.B. Degree awarded. All text material furnished. Easy payment plan. Send for FREE BOOK—Law and Executive Guidance"—NOW
AMERICAN EXTENSION SCHOOL OF LAW
Dept. 77-R 646 N. Michigan Ave. Chicago 11, Ill.

Learn BAKING at home
Baking is one of America's high industries in wages. Not seasonable, but year 'round good field for trained and experienced men. Thorough basic spare time home study course lays solid foundation. If you have the aptitude for this type of work, send for FREE Booklet, "Opportunities in Commercial Baking."
NATIONAL BAKING SCHOOL
1315 S. Michigan Ave., Dept. 1585 Chicago 5, Ill.

BE A DETECTIVE
WORK HOME or TRAVEL. Experience unnecessary.
DETECTIVE Particulars FREE Write to
GEO. Z. D. WAGNER, 125 W. 86th St., N. Y.

depleting ones. Perhaps they feel the push and pull of such influence something as did the gulls which were driven from the N. Y. Croton Reservoir with supersonics, or pigeons which lose directional sense near a radio transmitter. Maybe we, too, are affected by such waves but do not recognize it.

In early days when man could still read bird and animal signs in this field, he knew how to translate it into prophecy of a yes-and-no kind. From this he reasoned that the gods revealed to animals secrets withheld from man. This may explain the beginning of totemic worship and the deification of animals seven of which still rule aloofly from the zodiac, testimony of their once god-status.

IN BERLIN in the long ago days of a sane Germany, a famous old astrologer lived in a penthouse there with eight cats. He told someone I knew who consulted him that he thought cats had the ability to project some kind of magnetic force that was fortunate to those they loved. He believed it was the basis for mediaeval beliefs that connected cats with sorcery.

Something the same idea is expressed in the delightful custom of telling the bees, which is as old as the keeping of hives and still practised the world over by many beekeepers. There is, according to them, a mysterious rapport between the hive and the household, so that the bees will not be so diligent nor the home run so well unless the bees are told of all important happenings. Whittier's plaintive ballad TELLING THE BEES describes the custom with

". . . the chore girl small
Draping each hive with a shred of black.
"'Stay at home, pretty bees, fly not hence,
Mistress Mary is dead and gone.'"

If there is something to this, and beekeepers do believe in it, it implies translation of thought frequencies between beings without a common tongue, an idea long popular with writers of science fiction.

Crazy but true is the ability of a friend of mine to stop owls from hooting. Her colored nurse taught her as a child, and she is usually called on to demonstrate on country visits. She takes off her shoes and turns them upside down and the owl is silent at once. But she is sensitive, and it might not work so well for others. Even so, what reversal of what current stops the owl and why?

Townspeople think an owl hoots for death, but not country folk, they have too many owls. However there is a peculiar animal sensitivity to death that is well attested. An unusual instance of this occurred recently in a nearby town. The leading grocer had a cat which had been his daily companion for years. The grocer, an old man, had a brief illness and died. His son, on going to the store next day, found the cat had died in the night too. It had been strong and well and showed

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

no trace of sickness but lay as if quietly asleep. The family said it knew, that it padded along with its master when he went. Coincidence? To the skeptic, of course, but those who know animals admit strange things.

ONE often hears of an animal seeing the ghost of a human, but not often of its encounter with one of its own species. Wee McGregor, a three months old scottie, was given to a friend of mine to replace old Angus who had died six months before. Angus' deep shabby chair still stood in the far corner of the livingroom and from the first exerted a spell of fear and fascination on the puppy. He couldn't keep away from it but when he tried to get in it some force seemed to oppose it. We thought that must be imagination. Then one day—I saw this—the puppy in high romping spirit leaped on the chair. Instantly there was a yell of terror and the little dog was hurled, he did not fall, to the floor. When we picked him up his eyes were glazing and he died before help could be given him. We tried to be rational and think it was a fit, but we knew it couldn't have been. And old Angus had been a jealous dog in life.

A pampered Persian cat belonging to a woman doctor encountered a ghost when they moved into an old house. It sighed distressfully and high-heel tapped about the bedroom. The cat went into a convulsion of terror and could not be left alone even by day. Finally his mistress in a blaze of temper told the visitant that she had no respect for the quick or the dead who frightened an animal. The heeltaps were heard to go toward the door, then ceased. Nothing more was ever heard.

Egotists say that animals have no soul. But the ancients said the psyche was the soul—and there was Brillig. She was a beautiful dangerous brute, half shepherd, half malemute. She had been ill a long time and had not walked for a month before the vet brought her home to die of an incurable organic malady. She passed shortly into a coma, then pulse and breathing seemed to stop. Her master said she was dead. His wife, a woman of imagination, had heard there was an Anglican priest in town who practised healing by the laying on of hands. In response to her frantic telephone to save her pet, he came, prayed, stroked the dog's head and said he had done what he could. I, who was there, thought he had done nothing. So it was a miracle when Brillig opened her eyes, and a greater one next day when, without medicine, she stood up and walked a little, then got well. We asked the Father how he had done it.

"I awakened her psyche to the will to live. That is all I ever do," he said, "nature does the rest." The last I heard of Brillig her psyche was still wide awake.

Telepathy and clairvoyance are most often noticed by those who own pets. Nearly anyone who has a cat or dog can give you an instance. An airedale I know refused with cringing fear to

First time at anywhere near this low price! Authentic replica of romantic western saddle. Handsomely formed from solid Sterling Silver by Navajo Indian craftsmen. Massive style for men, dainty style for women. A gift of distinction. A pleasure to wear. Sent on approval.

SEND NO MONEY! Just clip this ad and mail with your name and address. Pay postman only $4.95 plus few cents postage on arrival; or send cash and we pay postage. Wear this sensational ring for 10 days. If not delighted, return for full refund. ORDER NOW! USE COUPON BELOW!

10 DAY TRIAL ORDER COUPON
ARIZONA CRAFTSMEN ROOM 615B
1904 FARNAM ST. OMAHA 2, NEBRASKA
SEND Sterling Saddle Ring as I have indicated below.
☐ C.O.D. ☐ Cash Enclosed, Send Postpaid
NAME
ADDRESS
CITY STATE
☐ Men's ☐ Women's Ring Size

When You Are in Havana
VISIT
EL PATIO
San Rafael Street No. 58
Perfumes ○ Novelties ○ Cigars ○ Liquors
MANUFACTURERS OF ALLIGATOR ARTICLES
Special Attention to Mail Orders
ISAAC HABIF, Prop.; MORRIS KESELMAN, Dir.

Learn Profitable Profession in 90 days at Home
Men and Women, 18 to 50
Many Swedish Massage graduates make $50, $75, or even more per week. Large full time incomes from doctors, hospitals, sanitoriums, clubs or private practice. Others make good money in spare time. You can win independence and prepare for future security by training at home and qualifying for diploma. Anatomy Charts and 32 page illustrated Book FREE —Now! The College of Swedish Massage Dept. 753-D, 100 E. Ohio St., Chicago 11

INVENTORS
Send today for "Detailed Patent Information" outlining preliminary steps to be taken toward Patent Protection, also convenient "Evidence of Invention" form.
VICTOR J. EVANS & CO.
224-D Merlin Building Washington 6, D. C.


PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ACCOUNTANT
BECOME AN EXPERT
Executive Accountants and C. P. A.'s earn $2,000 to $10,000 a year. Thousands of firms need them. We train you thoroly at home in spare time for C. P. A. examinations or executive accounting positions. Previous experience unnecessary. Personal training under supervision of staff of C. P. A.'s. Placement counsel and help. Write for free book, "Accountancy, the Profession That Pays." G. I. APPROVED.
LASALLE Extension University, 417 So. Dearborn St.
A Correspondence Institution Dept. H-416 Chicago 5, Ill.

## CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

### *Song Poems*

POEMS wanted for musical setting. Send poem for immediate consideration and Free Rhyming Dictionary. Richard Brothers, 96 Woods Building, Chicago, Ill.

POEMS Wanted. Free examination. Send poems to J. Chas. McNeil, Master of Music, 510 ZD South Alexandria Ave., Los Angeles 5, Calif.

SONGWRITERS: Songs published monthly. Advance royalty. Send your songs or poems today for our exciting offer. Hollywood Tunesmiths, Dept. EE-3, 1537 N. Vine St., Hollywood 28, Calif.

SONGWRITERS—Lyricists—Poets. This is your chance! Send us your name and address. Banner Music Publishers, Box 848, Grand Central Annex, New York 17, N. Y.

### *Miscellaneous*

RARE, unique, unusual, mystifying, money-making, occult, socialistic illustrated book catalogues, 10c (refundable). Wilborn, 706-AS Judson Rives Bldg., Los Angeles 13, Calif.

MAGAZINES (back dated)—foreign, domestic, arts. Books, booklets, subscriptions, pin-ups, etc. Catalog 10c (refunded). Cicerone's Center, 863 First Ave., New York 17, N. Y.

PIMPLES, Acne disappear. Clear your complexion. Write today. Immediately. Healthmaster (Dept. 10), 1441 Prospect Place, Brooklyn, New York.

CORRESPONDENCE Courses and self-instruction books slightly used. Sold. Rented. Exchanged. All subjects. Satisfaction guaranteed. Cash paid for used courses. Complete information and 100-page illustrated bargain catalog Free! Write Nelson Co., Dept. 56, Chicago 5, Ill.

BORROW by Mail! Loans $50.00 to $1,000.00 to employed men and women. Easy, quick. Completely private, confidential. No endorsers. Repay in convenient monthly payments. Details Free in plain envelope. Write First Loan Co., World Herald Bldg., Dept. G-58, Omaha, Nebr.

SCIENTIFICTION, weird, fantastic; books, magazines. Werewolf Bookshop, 621A Maryland, Pittsburgh 6, Pa.

SELLING large stock Fantasy Magazines. Write Fred Claassen, Post Office, Stow, Ohio.

ALASKA—"The Last Frontier" offers thousands of excellent opportunities! $1.00 brings official Government map and 1947 copyrighted report describing potential opportunities in Commercial Fishing, Mining, Fur Farming, Prospecting, Aviation Timber, Agriculture, Live Stock Raising, Business Enterprises, Government Homestead Lands. Alaska Opportunist, 6417 Homewood Ave., Dept. ZZ, Hollywood 28, Calif.

SPECIALISTS in field of science and weird fiction, occult, magic, theosophy, spiritualism. Catalogue issued, send stamp. Stephen's Book Service, 121 Freeman St., Brooklyn 22, N. Y.

INTERESTED in Latin America & Foreign employment? $1 brings 1947 Foreign Service Directory listing Oil, Aviation, Mining, Transportation, Manufacturing, Construction concerns with foreign interests and tips for immediate application. Global Reports, 6417 Homewood Ave., Dept. ZZ, Hollywood 28, Calif.

AT HOME—Your own manufacturing business; making popular $1.00 novelties. Cost you 3c to 15c. Everything supplied. Write So-Lo Works, Dept. T-643, Loveland, Ohio.

INTERNATIONAL Correspondence, Hobby-Exchange, non-matrimonial. Your listing, 20c. Sample copy, 10c. "For a friendlier world." Garnet Bulletin, 4315 First St., S.E., Washington 20, D.C.

ABUNDANCE. Make up your mind to have health, friends, opportunities, money, success and happiness Now! Amazingly easy master formula to awaken your Soul's Powers of Increase to Supply your needs, desires, and aspirations. Never fails! Money back guarantee. Write The Christines, Box 9609-ZD, Hollywood 27, Calif.

pass a fine-looking old man who had become a tenant in the same apartment house. Every time they met it happened until the dog's owner, curious about it, asked the janitor concerning the tenant. The janitor said that the old man in his earlier years—he was then retired—had been a well known scientist with his own laboratory where he had experimented on animals by vivisection.

Animal and human E. S. P. are basically the same, but with one difference. Humans experience it singly, though there are some rare exceptions. But animals, having as they do group consciousness, can react as a group—the flight of birds for instance. We do not often see examples of this because we don't get to know animals in groups. But group reactions may have been what made animal vision dependable and useful to primitive man. It is what may make animals of value for research in this field some day. Meanwhile, if your pet does or doesn't show you its psychic side, it is well to remember when meeting any animal William Vaughan Moody's

". . . an old chimpanzee with an Irish chin:
*There may be hidden meaning in his grin.*"

## READER'S PAGE

*(Continued from page 168)*

in the March issue . . . Grrrrrr. Who is this Lin Carter who says he hates Don Wilcox?

And just what is his objection to Wilcox's story, "The Land Of The Big Blue Apples"? I thought it was an excellent story. It had humor, action, suspense, and even drama. What more can you ask for? And the story, "The Red Door," if Carter would only look, he would see that Wilcox followed logical facts all the way.

For instance on the blades. It is a fact that those blades could actually perform just as they did in the story. I would very much like to know where Carter gets the idea that Don's stories are all "fairy tales." Of all things!

And now I'd like to give you my report on FA for the year 1946:

FEBRUARY ISSUE:

First place: "Toka And The Man Bats."
Second: "Moon Slave."
Third: "Vacation In Shasta."
Fourth: "The Life Symbol."
Fifth: "Siren Song."
Sixth: "Lark On The Ark."
(And boy, that last story was a bad one.)

MAY ISSUE:

First place: "The Land Of The Big Blue Apples."
Second: "The Sword And The Pool."
Third: "An Adam From The Sixth."
Fourth: "Christopher Crissom's Cravat."
Fifth: "The Crystal And The Spell."
Sixth: "Finished By Hand."
(And again, the last story was a bad one.)

JULY ISSUE:

First place: "The Cult Of The Eagle."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Also first: "To Watch By Night."
Second: "Trees A Crowd."
Third: "The Tale Of The Last Man." (Hmm.)
Fourth: "Jimmy Takes A Trip."
Fifth: "He Who Saw Tomorrow."
Sixth: "The Softly Silken Wallet."

SEPTEMBER ISSUE:

First place: "The Mirror." (Swell!!!)
Second: "Dual Personality."
Third: "Minions Of The Tiger."
Fourth: "Taming Of The Tyrant."
Fifth: "A Voice From Beyond."
Sixth: "I'll Take The Subway."
(This last story was really poor.)

NOVEMBER ISSUE:

First place: "Rocket To Limbo."
Second: "The Smiling Wife."
Third: "The Red Door."
Fourth: "Happiness Is Nowhere."
Fifth: "The Moving Finger."
Sixth: "The Counterfeiter." (Poor, Bob.)
Seventh: "Shadow Of The Sphinx."
(This last story had a very good plot but for me it was too dull reading.)

And while I'm at it I'd like to rate the first two issues of 1947:

JANUARY ISSUE:

First place: "Princess Of The Sea." (Swell!)
Second: "I'll Dream Of You." (Wow!!!)
Third: "Androcles And The Buccaneer."
Fourth: "A Little Knowledge."
Fifth: "Death Wears A Rose."
(Boy, that was the best issue I've seen in a long time—since Hector was a pup! Wonder what Lin Carter thinks of that Wilcox story!)

MARCH ISSUE:

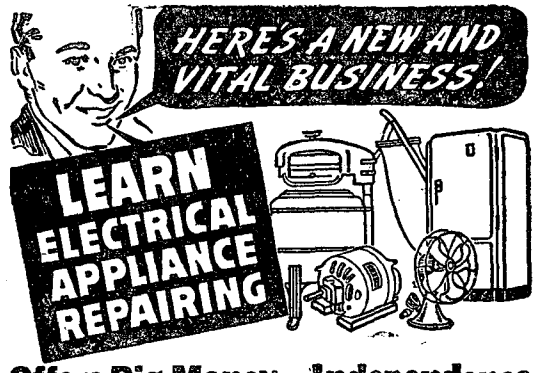
First place: "Man Of Two Worlds." (Wow!!)
Second: "You Can't Scare Me." (Boy, good old Toffee again—yum . . .)
Third: "The Princess And Her Pig."
Fourth: "Forever Is Too Long." (Very good.)
Fifth: "Not As Plotted."
Sixth: "Hickson's Strange Adventure."

In summing all these up, it's easy to see from my first place selections of "regular" FA writers that Wilcox, Hamling, Livingston, Pelkie, and Williams, are among my top favorites. By the way, why don't you get any more Pelkie "Toka" stories? . . . Anybody got back issues to sell?

Paul Kern,
R.F.D. No. 3,
Continental, Ohio.

*All we've got to say, Paul, is that you've done a whale of a job picking your favorites. Of course, some of the stories that you ranked low, ranked very high with other readers—but we'll say that you know what you want and know where to get it—in FA. We'll be watching the mail for future ratings of yours. And along these lines, the rest of you readers can do the same.*

*Wilcox, incidentally, was mighty pleased to hear that you liked his stories so much. And we must say that we agree with you on Don. He's a top notcher in every sense of the word.....Ed.*

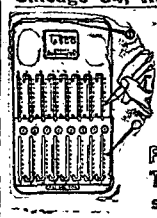




**Offers Big Money—Independence**

If you are mechanically inclined—can hold and use tools—it will pay you to learn electrical appliance repairing. Operate from your garage, basement, etc. Work as many hours as you wish—the appliance repairman is his own boss. On many types of repairs it is usual for a repairman to charge on the basis of $5.00 to $6.00 an hour!

**No Pervious Experience Needed**

Profusely illustrated, our new course shows you in simple, easy to understand language plus drawings and photographs, how to make each repair on refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, washing machines, motors, fans, irons, etc., etc. Explains and gives you a working knowledge of electricity, welding, nickel plating, etc. Shows you how to build the power tools you need and how to solicit and keep business coming to you. Not a theory course but an honest to goodness practical course written by and used by repairmen the country over. Price of course is so low that the savings on your own household appliances will pay for it. Act now! Send today for FREE literature. **Christy Supply Co., 2835 N. Central Ave., Dept. D-232, Chicago 34, Illinois.**



**POCKET ADDING MACHINE**

Sturdy steel construction for lifetime use. Adds, subtracts, aids multiplication. Capacity 999,999.99. A real machine—guaranteed 5 years. Thousands of satisfied users. Send name and address. We ship immediately. On delivery, pay postman $2.50 (plus C.O.D. and postage charges). If you send $2.50 with order, we pay postage. Leatherette case 25c additional. Your money back after 10 days' trial if not satisfied.

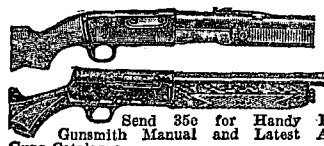
**Free Trial $2.50** Send No Money

**TAVELLA SALES CO.**
Dept. 86, 25 W. Broadway, New York 7, N. Y.

Banish the craving for tobacco as thousands have with Tobacco Redeemer. Write for free booklet telling of injurious effect of tobacco and of a treatment which has relieved many men. Caution: Use only as directed. **30 Years in Business**

**FREE BOOK**

**THE NEWELL COMPANY**
284 Clayton Sta., St. Louis 5, Mo.



Ammunition
Shotgun Shells
Rifle Ammunition
Revolver Ammunition
New Shotguns
New Rifles

Send 35c for Handy Home Workshop Gunsmith Manual and Latest Ammunition and Guns Catalogue.

**NEW YORK COMPANY, 10600-10710 West Ridgway Block Ridgway Pennsylvania**

**PATENTS** Write for full information on what steps an inventor should take to secure a Patent.

**RANDOLPH & BEAVERS, 920 Columbian Bldg., Washington 1, D.C.**


PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I'll PROVE I can make YOU, too, TOUGH as a MARINE

.....and add Powerful POUNDS and Vital INCHES of DYNAMIC MUSCLE to your ARMS, LEGS, BACK, CHEST, and SHOULDERS

Says George F. Jowett

WORLD'S GREATEST BODY BUILDER

..OR IT WON'T COST YOU A CENT!

Let me prove to YOU that you can put inches of dynamic muscles on your arms! Add inches to your chest! Broaden your shoulders and power-pack the rest of your body. I can do for you what I've done for thousands the world over, including many officers and men now in the U. S. and British Armed Forces!

GIVE ME 10 MINUTES A DAY!

I'll Show You My Secrets Of Body Building

I'll help you learn the "Progressive Power Method" through which I rebuilt myself from a physical wreck to the holder of more strength records than any other living athlete or teacher! No matter how skinny or flabby you are, you can learn my methods right in your own home. Through my proved secrets I show you how to develop your power, inside and out, until YOU are fully satisfied that you are the man you want to be. "The Jowett System," says R. F. Kelly, Physical Director of the YMCA, Atlantic City, "is the greatest in the world!"

If you want a physique that will inspire respect from men, and admiration from women . . . ACT LIKE A HE-MAN! Decide at once! The famous book, "Nerves of Steel—Muscles Like Iron" will be included FREE! Priceless for the strength fan! Full of photos of marvelous power-bodied men who will show you what Jowett has done for them and how he can do the same for you. Reach out . . . Grasp this Special Offer today!

PROVE TO YOURSELF IN ONE NIGHT!

Send only 25c for test Course, "Molding a Mighty Arm." Read it the evening it arrives—learn from experience the thrill you can give your muscles!

SEND FOR THESE FIVE FAMOUS COURSES IN BOOK FORM

ONLY 25c EACH or ALL 5 for $1.00

Jowett Institute of Physical Culture
230 Fifth Avenue
Dept. ZD-74
New York 1, N. Y.

This Book Free!

BOOK WITH PHOTOS OF FAMOUS STRONG MEN FREE

MAIL COUPON NOW!

Jowett Institute of Physical Culture
230 Fifth Avenue, Dept. ZD-74, New York 1, N. Y.
George F. Jowett: Your proposition looks good to me. Send by return mail, prepaid, the courses checked below, for which I enclose ( ). Include FREE book of PHOTOS.

George F. Jowett Champion of Champions

☐ All 5 courses for.... $1 ☐ Molding Mighty Legs 25c
☐ Molding a Mighty Arm 25c ☐ Molding a Mighty Grip 25c
☐ Molding a Mighty Back 25c ☐ Molding a Mighty Chest 25c
☐ Send all 5 C.O.D. ($1 plus postage.) No orders less than $1 sent C.O.D.

NAME.....Age.....
(Please print plainly. Include Zone Number.)

ADDRESS .....


# DISAPPEARANCE OF THE WOLF-MEN

★ By JON BARRY ★

BY FAR the weirdest manifestation of man's fertile imagination is the belief in the werewolf, termed by men of science as "lycanthropy." Hollywood has projected the idea on the screen in our age, but the conception of a man changing into a wolf in the still of the night and consuming his fellow beings, is an ancient one.

Wolfmen were known to the Greeks. In Roman texts, Virgil writes of a man turned into a wolf by the action of powerful drugs. In Europe during the Middle Ages persons were believed to use magical means to transform themselves into wolves. Out of the idea of werewolves grew the conception of witches and their power to assume other bodily shapes.

In France, during the 16th century, an entire community rose up against one of its citizens who it accused of roaming the fields and silent streets attacking helpless victims and devouring them cannibal fashion. Jean Grenier was convicted, but the authorities chose to treat him as an insane person. This was probably the first recorded instance in history that recognition was accorded the true nature of the strange and terrifying malady.

One unusual form of lycanthropy that people of earlier times were familiar with consisted of the man and animal body remaining separated, but exchanging souls for the duration of the night. The man would fall into a cataleptic state, would be observed to twitch and turn in agony, while a wolf would cause a reign of terror on a sleeping village. If wounded, the marks were thought to appear on both the man's and animal's body in identical positions marking their mysterious relationship for all to see.

Although the idea of people turning into animals died when the last vestages of witchcraft and black magic disappeared from civilized minds, in remote parts of the world, these fantastic beliefs still persist. Among some of the natives of India, there is the superstition that certain wild children who have been suckled by wolves exist in every generation. These strange beings are supposed to retain some of the characteristics of their animal nurses, enough of them to cause terror in the hearts of many ignorant villagers. Tribes in the African jungle tell tales of men who have assumed the form of tigers and other wild beasts of the jungle to stalk their human victims.

Today werewolves and tiger-men live only in the world of man's imagination. Authors, especially weavers of mystery tales, call upon them often to provide the chills and thrills readers thrive on.

* * *

PRINTED IN U. S. A.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# 'I TALKED WITH GOD'

Dr. Frank B. Robinson

Impossible — you say? No, it is not impossible. You can do the same thing. For there has come to the earth a brilliant, shining revelation of the power of The Spirit of God. It has come because the human race, through the Atomic Bomb — could very easily annihilate itself. So the Spirit of God has spoken and the revelation and the Power that is following, staggers the imagination. In the past 18 years, MORE THAN HALF A MILLION people have told us without our asking them, what happened when they too discovered the actual and literal Power of The Spirit of God, right here on earth, in their own lives.

The future is dangerous. Fear fills most hearts. But may I say to you that there can come into your life, dancing flashes of the Spiritual Power of God? I mean NOW. And when you do find, and know this beautiful Power, whatever problems, trials, fears which may beset you, melt away under the shimmering Power of God. In place of these fears, doubts, and trials, there comes a lovely Peace — a Peace which only God can give —and POWER? — well —the human race knows little of this POWER, which upsets many old conceptions of God, and puts in YOUR hands, and mine, the Power Jesus promised when He said:—"**The things that I do shall ye do also.**"

I want you to know of this Power. I live for no other purpose. For when this dynamic, invisible Power changed my life, my duty was very plain. TELL OTHERS — that's what God said to me, and I've been doing that faithfully for the past 18 years. Write me a simple postcard, or letter, NOW, and ask me for my 6000 word message, which will give you a slight insight into the most soul-stirring revelation from God this world has ever known. Address me as follows:—"DR. FRANK B. ROBINSON, Dept. 47-17, Moscow, Idaho and this message, which is TOTALLY FREE, will be sent by mail immediately. **But write now—ere you forget.** The address again—Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 47-17 Moscow, Idaho.

---

*The Psychiana Religion is, as its name implies, a religious Movement operating under Idaho non-profit religious charter. We are in our 18th year of exclusive operation through the mails. More than half a million people EACH MONTH receive our literature. We operate in our own peculiar way which is different from that of any other religion in America. We plead with every American to allow us to point out this new revelation of the Spirit of God. It is the only revelation which can bring permanent Peace to the human race. It has its inspiration in the Realm of The Spirit of God.*

COPYRIGHT 1946 "THE PSYCHIANA RELIGION"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMING... in the **JUNE** issue of

# Mammoth DETECTIVE

*A complete, book-length mystery novel by one of America's best-known detective story writers*

# COUNTERFEIT WIFE

## by BRETT HALLIDAY

Brett Halliday's red-haired private detective, Michael Shayne, has become a favorite with millions of detective story fans by means of novels, short stories, radio programs, and motion pictures. Next month MAMMOTH DETECTIVE brings you the latest of Shayne's exploits—seventy thousand words of rapid-fire action, and a plot that will thrill and delight you. Be sure to get your copy of June MAMMOTH DETECTIVE.

*A Michael Shayne Mystery*

IN THE **JUNE** ISSUE OF
**MAMMOTH DETECTIVE**
*On Sale* MARCH 25
AT NEWSSTANDS EVERYWHERE

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED